

THE : AWAKENING
: OF : THE : EAST :



PIERRE LEROY-BEAULIEU

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THE
AWAKENING OF THE EAST

SIBERIA—JAPAN—CHINA

BY
PIERRE LEROY-BEAULIEU

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD DAVEY

With a Preface

BY
HENRY NORMAN

AUTHOR OF
'PEOPLE AND POLITICS OF THE FAR EAST,' 'THE REAL JAPAN,' ETC.

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1900

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PREFACE*

M. LEROY-BEAULIEU's work appears in English at a singularly appropriate moment, and I believe that those who know most about the Far East will be the warmest in its praise. Its personal observations are acute, its statistics have been conscientiously gathered and carefully collated, they are scrupulously restricted to the particular matters they are intended to illuminate, while most valuable of all is the author's political sagacity, and the detachment, so to speak, of his attitude as an observer and investigator. If one may say so without offence, this is rare in a writer of M. Leroy-Beaulieu's nationality. A Frenchman is usually so good a Frenchman that he cannot divest himself, even for an hour, of the preferences and prejudices of his own land and race. When, however, you do find a Frenchman who by temperament, research, and travel has attained to a cosmopolitan impartiality, then nobody dwells in so cool and clear an atmosphere as he. The present volume, I venture to say, is

* Mr. Richard Davey is responsible for the translation of this work, but I have added a footnote here and there (signed by my initials), and I have revised the spelling of the proper names to bring them into accordance with English usage. To forestall the charge of inconsistency, I may say that I have acted on the principle generally adopted in the spelling of European proper names, that is, I have retained improper spellings consecrated by long custom—for instance, Chefoo, Suchow, Hankow, Kowloon, just as we write Florence, Munich, Naples, Moscow. But names not yet regularly Europeanized I have spelled according to a consistent and more reasonable system of transliteration—as Kiao-chau, Pe-chi-li, Kwei-chau. The French spelling of Chinese proper names looks very strange to an English eye, and would convey a wholly false impression to an English ear.

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an example of this, for if there were no name on the title-page, and the word 'we' were not used of the French people, it would be impossible to discover the writer's nationality from his work. Hypercriticism might perhaps remark that M. Leroy-Beaulieu is just a little too ready to welcome as fact malicious little anecdotes directed against ourselves, such as the ingenious fiction that the British admiral saluted the Japanese admiral's flag outside Wei-hai-wei before sunrise in order that the guns should awaken the sleeping Chinese seamen to a sense of their peril, not to mention his ready acceptance as typical of the 'insatiable British public' of the amusing boast of some unnamed English newspaper that we might, if it pleased us, build a railway from the mouth of the Nile to the mouth of the Yang-tsze. But, on the whole, he probably approaches as near to the 'impartial spectator' of an old-fashioned philosophical hypothesis as it is given to anybody in this prejudiced world to do; and assuredly the brilliant ability with which he has analyzed and summarized national and international situations of the greatest delicacy and complexity speaks for itself.

Beyond question the future of the Far East is the gravest matter before the civilized world to-day. For many generations the Eastern Question caused Sovereigns to turn restlessly in their beds and diplomatists to start at a footfall; but, as Lord Rosebery was quick to point out, there arose not long ago a Far Eastern Question much more embarrassing, much more complicated, much more pregnant with disaster. It presents itself at this moment under three chief aspects: the approaching completion of a Russian continuous line of railway from Europe to the China Sea, the frontier of Korea, and the gates of Peking; the startling entry of Japan into the comity of peoples as a great naval, military, and civilizing power; and the course of events which has led to the occupation of the Chinese capital by the allied forces of eight nations. It is precisely with these three topics that M. Leroy-Beaulieu deals, and there will be no need to recommend them to the earnest

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attention of British readers if the latter realize—as they should—that behind the third there looms without doubt the appalling spectre of a European War.

The Trans-Siberian Railway has been greatly hindered by the Chinese rising in Manchuria. For practical purposes it can hardly be said to exist beyond Irkutsk, for although the line is completed as far as Stretensk, there is yet a lack of rolling-stock, and the dreary voyage by steamers of different draughts down the Shilka and Amur rivers to Khabarovsk, where the line to Vladivostok is met, deprives the railway route as yet of all its advantages over the sea-route from Europe. The last passengers who came from Vladivostok to Moscow before the interruption of traffic spent thirty-eight days on the journey, and it will have been noticed that by far the larger part of the reinforcing Russian troops, horses, and *matériel* were despatched to the Far East from Odessa, no small portion in British transports. The Manchurian section of the great railway has from the first, even in times of peace, presented great difficulties of climate, lack of supplies, and hostility of the native population, but now a considerable part of the work executed has been destroyed, the Russian forces have not yet succeeded in clearing the country of the Chinese troops and irregulars, a large garrison will have to be maintained to protect the works in hand, and a long delay over the original estimated dates of completion is inevitable. All this, however, is nothing but a question of date. In national strategic enterprises of this kind Russia works with speed and tenacity. What has been destroyed will be built more solidly than before; it is even probable that recent events, as they will undoubtedly give Russia a freer hand, will enable her to secure a shorter, and therefore more effective, route from her Siberian line to China. It will not, in any case, be many years before Port Arthur and Peking will be within a fortnight's railway journey of Moscow. Before then that railway will have developed agricultural and mineral wealth along its route to a

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degree undreamed of by those who have not studied its prospects on the spot, and it will be defended and served by every kind of protective and paternal legislation. Moreover, when need arises, every mile of the line, every station and warehouse and water-tank, every station-master, every engineer, every conductor, every patrolling convict, every locomotive, every carriage and every waggon, will be placed by a stroke of the pen at the absolute disposal of the Minister of War, while every railway in European Russia will be called upon to supply whatever may be lacking. Russia has one great advantage over other countries in times of crisis—private interests cease to exist. It must not be forgotten, also, that the Trans-Siberian Railway is only one of Russia's great strategic lines towards the East. Before it is finished, her Trans-Caspian Railway, which is already not only a military, but positively a commercial success, will be joined to it, and will have brought the frontiers of Persia and Afghanistan, and another frontier of China, within a week of the military centre of European Russia. Whether from the point of view of inter-communication, of commerce, or of diplomacy and arms, no single development so significant and so far-reaching in its consequences has occurred in the modern world.

The second aspect of the Far Eastern Question is at last happily appreciated by all. The 'child of the world's old age,' Japan, has grown to manhood. It is exactly eighteen years—the age at which Sovereigns attain their majority—since Count Inouye first proposed to the sixteen treaty Powers—including Peru and Hawaii !—that Japan, in return for certain concessions to foreigners, should be endowed with a measure of judicial autonomy. Great Britain, to her honour be it ever remembered, led the way in this, and Japan is now a nation as independent as ourselves—the first Oriental people to be placed absolutely on a par with the conquering and jealous West. In no respect has she shown herself unworthy of the faith placed in her. In art alone has she retrograded, but that will not be held a

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special reproach to her by those among us who look back six centuries for their artistic inspiration. In finance, in law, in science, in education, in manufacture, she has already attained a higher level than many so-called civilized nations, and she is progressing fast. In directions unfortunately still more calculated to compel the respect of other peoples—a very powerful army and navy, perfectly equipped, admirably disciplined, and instinct with the magnificent courage of the old feudal warriors—her advance has taken the unthinking world by surprise. But for her prompt and unselfish action in China, and the large force which her first-rate military system enabled her to despatch without delay, Europe and America would to-day be mourning the most horrible massacre of modern history. At this moment Japan and Great Britain are the only nations striving, and, if necessary, probably ready to fight, to keep China independent and undivided, open to the trade of all the world on equal terms, without selfish reservations on the one hand, and without trembling before party recriminations on the other.

The Far Eastern Question, however, holds the stage at this moment by its third aspect. China, the eternally unoriginal, has repeated herself once more, as every student of the Far East has foreseen she would. This time the repetition is extraordinarily exact, as a reviewer of the new edition of Lord Loch's 'Personal Narrative' of 1860 has just pointed out. 'It is impossible,' he says, 'to read it without being struck by the resemblance, down even to details, between the situation in China and that of exactly forty years ago. Then, as now, a war party led by an Imperial Prince was in the ascendant; a war was forced on European Powers by a gross breach of a solemn treaty, two Ambassadors on their way to Peking being fired on and obliged to return; the armies of those Powers had to march on the Chinese capital; the Chinese authorities in the provinces were frantic in their eagerness to negotiate so as to stop the advance of the allied army on the capital. Li, then only a

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provincial Governor, had his little proposals for settling everything to his own satisfaction. The Emperor had fled from the capital, and the lady who is now Empress-Dowager had fled with him, and in many other respects history is just now repeating itself with curious fidelity.* But forty years ago there was no occupation by eight nations, and no five great Powers endeavouring to checkmate one another's plans. Indeed, there was then no Far Eastern Question at all. But though we have changed, China remains the same. Her rooted hatred of foreigners, her treachery, her lies, her sickening cruelty, her utter inability to reform herself, to eradicate corruption, to form an army or a navy—to be, in a word, a nation—remain precisely as they have always been. Writers with no first-hand knowledge of China have not unnaturally fallen into the error of thinking that because small-bore rifles and Krupp guns have been found in the hands of the Chinese troops, who have used them with effect in beating back for a time foreign forces, therefore China has at last laid to heart the lessons of her defeat by Japan, and has become a military Power to be reckoned with.† It is a complete misapprehension. The Boxers fought recklessly, like the Mahdists, from a belief in their own magical invulnerability; but the regular troops hardly even attempted to withstand a foreign attack in anything like equal numbers, except from behind strong walls, and not always then. Describing the capture without a shot or a blow of several forts and magnificent guns, that had never been fired since they were bought, an eye-witness says: 'Only the most complete demoralization, utter rout, and headlong

* The *Times*, September 13th, 1900.

† For example, the writer signing himself 'Diplomaticus' in the *Fortnightly Review* for September, 1900, airily dismisses as 'illusions' the belief that 'China was gradually crumbling to ruin, that she was incapable of organized resistance to the foreigner, that her millions were unconscious of a national spirit and incapable of progress.' Each one of these 'illusions' is an elementary fact about China, except so far as foreign help and guidance may alter it.

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flight of the Chinese could explain the abandonment of such valuable guns, gear, and equipment.’*

I dwell upon this point because there is great danger of it being overlooked at the present crisis—by some from ignorance, by others from design. As the missionary said to M. Leroy-Beaulieu, ‘Those who most despair of China are those who know her best’; and the author’s own conclusion that ‘any reform from the inside is out of the question, no matter from how high the initiative starts,’ is the conviction of all students of China, except those who have never been within ten thousand miles of her coast. This very weakness, coupled with her malleability, even to the profession of arms—witness the gallant conduct of the Chinese Regiment from Wei-hai-wei under its British officers—is the kernel of the danger of the present situation, for the nation that should be free to organize China would be a menace to the rest of the world. Those who aim at conquest are therefore playing for a high stake, and their inspiration is more cogent than that which urges others to the defence of mere trading opportunities. The course of the coming century depends upon the result of this trial of statesmanship. Woe betide England if her leaders fail her now!

HENRY NORMAN.

* The *Times* special correspondent, September 11th, 1900.

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INTRODUCTION*

THIS book is the result of personal observations made in the course of a journey through Siberia, China, and Japan, lasting over a year, and is supplemented by information derived chiefly from official and carefully collated documents. Asia, the largest of the five Continents, is still the most densely populated ; but after being the cradle of civilization, it has been for many centuries dead to all progress. It is in the awakening of this vast Continent through the influx of men and ideas from the West, by the application of modern science to the exploitation of its wealth, that consists the phenomenon which we are witnessing at the present time, and to the examination of which the author devotes the following pages.

The effect of European action in Asia does not, it is true, date from our time ; it began as soon as the Asiatic invasion of Europe had ceased. In the sixteenth century, whilst the Russians were settling in Siberia, we find the Portuguese landing on the coasts of India, China, and Japan. For a long time, however, the influence of the West was merely superficial. By the middle of the nineteenth century it had scarcely reached India and a few points on the coast of Asia Minor ; all the rest of Asia remained obdurate. Siberia was almost a desert, unexplored, without any communication with the outer world ; China a stranger to all progress ; and Japan hermetically sealed. Thus, all the temperate zones of Asia, those best suited to the white race, as well as those inhabited by the most numerous,

* Written especially for the English edition by the author.

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industrious, and vigorous populations, regarded from whatever point of view, were fifty years ago completely outside of European influence. At this moment two facts of vital importance have become prominent, which have been passed over almost unnoticed by European nations, greatly preoccupied by other questions. In 1854, Japan began to open her ports to foreigners ; and Russia, descending almost simultaneously from the glacial solitudes of the Okhotsk Sea, seized, at the expense of China, the banks of the Amur, thus coming into actual contact with the Celestial Empire, which hitherto she had only reached through deserts, advanced her frontier up to the boundaries of Korea, and acquired a port on the Pacific (latitude 43°), free of ice nearly all the year round. This was the moment when that awakening of Northern and Eastern Asia began which has become more and more active, especially during the last ten years.

Immediately after the conquest of the Province of the Amur, Count Muravief-Amurski, one of the prime movers in the expansion of Russia, foresaw under what conditions the Muscovite Empire could make its power felt in the Far East, and suggested the construction of a Trans-Siberian Railway, which, thirty years later, was undertaken by Alexander III. In building it, his main idea was to open a strategic route to facilitate the passage of his troops into China. The Trans-Siberian Railway was thus constructed far less in the interests of the country it traversed than for those of the countries at its opposite extremities. But it was presently discovered that the southern portion of Siberia through which the line runs possessed a climate scarcely more severe than that of Manitoba and of the far west of Canada, an equally fertile soil, with even better irrigation and still greater mineral wealth, the development of which was only prevented by the complete absence of any means of communication.

Now Siberia, instead of being shut off from the rest of the world, will be traversed by one of the most frequented routes

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in the universe, and its southern zone will become one of the richest possessions of the white race. The Russian peasants have a natural tendency to emigrate, and since the abolition of serfdom have been invading Siberia in great numbers, and rapidly settling there. More than 200,000 emigrants arrive there every year, and the births greatly outnumber the deaths, so that the population of the Asiatic domains of the Tsar is annually increased by more than 300,000. Russian colonization doubtless has its drawbacks, the most serious among which are lack of capital and absence of education and enterprise among the labouring classes. In spite of this one fact remains: thanks to the Trans-Siberian Railway, a numerous white population is already occupying the whole North of Asia, from the Urals to the Pacific, and thus Russia can meanwhile make the full weight of her power felt in the Far East, which will certainly prove of incalculable benefit to the advance of modern civilization throughout Asia.

While Siberia was being colonized, and the Trans-Siberian Railway was assuming definite shape, Japan was accomplishing her extraordinary transformation. In 1854 the Powers, under threat of bombardment, forced open the gates of this feudal State, whose customs differed from ours more than those of any other Asiatic country, and the entrance to which was forbidden to foreigners under pain of death, and which for ten years was the scene of numerous outrages against them. Forty-five years later new Japan deals on a footing of equality with the European Powers; its admission to the number of civilized States is signalized by the suppression of the extra-territorial privileges of the Europeans, and it has become a centre of great industry, whose cotton stuffs compete in China with those of India, America, and Great Britain. European steamers supply themselves from her coaling-stations; her foreign commerce amounts annually to £44,000,000 sterling; her soil is intersected by 3,125 miles

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of railway ; a crowd of little steamers, often native built, ply along her coasts, whilst regular lines of steamers fly her flag in the ports of Europe, America, and Australia ; her fleet is the most powerful in the Pacific ; her army, which crushed China five years ago, formed the bulk of the international troops that recently marched to the relief of the foreign Legations threatened by the Chinese. Before these realities the scepticism of those who have so long jeered at these Asiatics playing at being Europeans must perforce turn to admiration.

Many people, however, find it difficult to believe in the durability and the sincerity of Japan's transformation. Without concealing from ourselves that the prodigious work which has been accomplished in Japan has sometimes been premature, that imitation of Europe has occasionally been pushed to excess, that it has even been directed in some points where it would have been wiser to have remained faithful to national traditions, we believe—as one of the best informed Japanese we have ever met assured us—that the great wind from the West which is blowing upon this country has come to last. We find this conviction confirmed both by observation of the Japan of the present and in the lessons taught by her past. Where the changes have been carried too far, certain unassimilated and unessential scoriæ will be eliminated, but the better part of the work will remain and a new Japan be the result, in many points similar to Europe in the scientific and material sense of civilization—profoundly modified and brought nearer to the West, yet differing from us from the social and moral point of view. In short, we have confidence in the future of Japan, if she only takes the lessons she has received to heart, and if she be not over-proud of being the 'Great Britain of the Far East,' and is not carried away by a spirit of aggrandizement that may exhaust her resources. The prudent policy which she appears to have adopted in the face of the present crisis in China is, however, of a character well calculated to reassure her friends.

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The study of the Chinese problem closes this volume. The Celestial Empire, so far from being revived like its neighbours, has resolutely made no concession to Western civilization. As long as China had only to trouble over the intermittent and not far-reaching action of Western Powers, distracted by a thousand other cares, and whose commercial activity found outlets in other directions, she had not much difficulty in maintaining her isolation.

From the moment, however, when she found herself face to face with near and powerful neighbours, rejuvenated nations, from whose eyes her incurable weaknesses were not screened by the illusion of distance, she was destined, if she did not yield with a good grace, to be swept along by the torrent of innovation which she has so long and so vainly sought to resist. Japan, by her victories in a war which was in reality a war of Western Science *versus* Chinese Routine, a war of Progress against Stagnation, in 1895 forced open the gates of China. If she had not done so then, undoubtedly Russia would have achieved the same work a few years later, after the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The Middle Kingdom no longer frightens the world by its vastness, and those innovations which it abhors are now thrust upon it by foreigners; thus has been brought about a situation pregnant with political and economical consequences still further complicated by the rivalries of the European nations vying with each other to realize a transformation from which they hope to reap enormous advantages.

We have also endeavoured in this book to note down the salient features of the present position, the knowledge of which may serve to throw a light on the future of the Celestial Empire. Firstly, by recalling the detestable Government imposed upon China by the all-powerful class of *literati*, who remain petrified in their stubborn pride, incurable routinists, and hostile to progress; then, in contrast to the decrepitude of this Government, the vitality of the people,

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whose undeniable defects are compensated by an endurance, perseverance, and commercial ability of the highest order ; the attitude of this people towards Europeans and their civilization, the part hitherto played by the latter, their trade in the ports, and the quite recent beginnings of great industries in these very ports ; the concessions for various undertakings granted during the last four years to these very Europeans who are at last emerging from the few acres in which they had hitherto been penned at infrequent points along the coast or on the banks of the Yang-tsze, and who are abandoning their exclusive devotion to trade in order to carry out a system of real colonization by applying Western methods to the realization of the wealth of China ; and finally the disquieting spectacle of the Powers in rivalry around this decrepit Empire, on which none dare lay a too heavy hand lest it crumble away and they lose the best pieces, which each of them dreams eventually of annexing.

Since this book was published in France, in April this year, a particularly grave crisis has arisen in China. The most violently reactionary faction in the Court of Peking has seized the reins of power and has headed a movement for the extermination of the foreigner ; the regular army, making common cause with the fanatical adherents of secret societies, has besieged in their Legations the Ministers of all the nations, and has opposed the onward march of the troops despatched to their relief ; hundreds of missionaries and thousands of native Christians have been butchered throughout the Empire, and everywhere, even in the Treaty Ports, the security of Europeans has been menaced. These appalling events have, it would seem, taken Europe quite unprepared, although warnings were not wanting. A perusal of a file of the Hong Kong and Shanghai newspapers will easily prove that great uneasiness prevailed as far back as last spring, if not in the Legations, at any rate in the Treaty Ports.

The present crisis will, it is true, not be a matter of much

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surprise to those who have studied China. The reader will notice several passages in this book in which we are reminded of the necessity of proceeding with the utmost caution in introducing progressive measures into the ancient Empire, if we wish to avoid an outbreak culminating in a sanguinary upheaval and the possible collapse of that worm-eaten structure. It would appear, however, in fact, that during the past three years the ill-advised action of Europe has done everything to bring about such a disaster.

Too numerous railway and mining concessions, preliminary works commenced simultaneously in a great number of localities, without sufficient regard for the superstitions of the natives, the invasion by foreign engineers and foremen with overbearing manners, could not but irritate the Chinese, and prepare the ground for agitators and agents of the secret societies and (unemployed) literati who swarm everywhere. The violent action of Germany at Kiao-chau, followed by the seizure of many points on the coast by the other Powers, readily induced the Court and literati to believe that the Foreign Powers intended to partition China, and treat her as a conquered country.

The governing classes among the Chinese have little patriotism, as we understand it, but they tremble for their salaries and privileges, and, in common with the populace, they beheld with horror the prospective violation of their ancient customs. They could not therefore be expected to repress with any energy disturbances with whose authors they were in cordial sympathy. Again, the dynasty of foreign origin which reigns in China is now worn out and tottering ; it knows that any concession made to the foreigner will be turned to its disadvantage, that the best means of recovering prestige is to pose as the enemy of the Western civilization ; it has even to fear that any great opposition on its part to popular prejudice may one day lead to its being swept away.

What wonder, then, that under the rule of the old Dowager

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Empress—an energetic Sovereign, perhaps, but ignorant, like the harem recluse she is, and, moreover, passionate, like most women—the Court viewed benignly the organization known as the *I-ho-chuan*, almost literally, ‘League of Patriots,’ which we call ‘Boxers,’ who first spread themselves over Shantung, where the foreigners had displayed the greatest brutality and tactlessness! The creatures of the Empress, narrow-minded and brutal Manchu princes, mandarins of an ultra-reactionary type, who, having never been brought into contact with Europeans, are ignorant of the latter’s strength—all these people whom the Palace revolution in September, 1898, exalted to power, and who exercise it without control since the exile of Li Hung-chang to his distant Viceroyalty of Canton, have not learned how to observe the precautions which at one time guided that wily old fox.

Imperial edicts have favoured the Boxers, ‘those loyal subjects who cultivate athletics for the protection of their families, and who bind together different villages for the purpose of mutual protection.’ In this association, affiliated with other secret societies, it was sought to discover a prop for the dynasty both at home and abroad. Arms were procured from Europe, intended either for the rebels or the regular army, and then, as always happens with feeble Governments in times of trouble, it was found impossible to stem the torrent so easily let loose, and increasing violence soon got the upper hand. The Empress even appears to have been overwhelmed by factions more reactionary and fanatical than herself—factions at whose head stands Prince Tuan, father of the recently adopted heir-presumptive.

Such is the genesis of the present crisis. What are to be the consequences? They would be very grave if the chiefs of the movement hostile to foreigners removed the present Emperor to some distant place, and refused to negotiate on anything like reasonable terms, or if, leaving him in the hands of the Europeans, they should raise a competitor against him.

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The Emperor, whose accession to the Celestial throne is, in any case, according to Chinese ideas, irregular, and who has exasperated the mandarins by his attempts at reform, would thus run a great risk of being considered a usurper, both in the eyes of the people and the literati. What could the Powers do in such a case? We hardly dare dream of such a laborious, costly, and deadly undertaking as would be an expedition five or six hundred miles from the coast into the heart of a country like China, devoid of good means of transport, and where a large European army would find existence difficult. Besides, in the midst of complete anarchy and civil war, the Powers, whose union is already so unstable, would be forced to interfere, with the risk of irreparable disputes arising between them all at the finish.

Even if the Court should come to terms and no competition for the Empire arise, the situation in China will none the less present great difficulties. The installation in Peking of an Emperor surrounded by councillors approved by the West and watched by a foreign garrison, which would be the most desirable end of the present acute crisis, would not suffice to restore order throughout the Empire. All the elements of agitation are now at boiling-point, and it is even to be feared that ere the allies are able to act vigorously on the offensive, the anti-foreign movement will have gained ground in the provinces. The prestige of the Manchu dynasty, greatly damaged already, will be still further lowered when the Emperor is exhibited as the puppet of the West. Ambitious aspirants of all sorts, Chinese patriots inimical to both Manchu and foreigner, even legitimate representatives of the ancient Ming Dynasty, will all of them seek to profit by this state of things, and, fishing in troubled waters, cause thereby a general recrudescence of insurrection, fomented by the secret societies. Will the Chinese Government succeed in repressing them by its own forces? This is not at all certain, and in that case will Europe charge herself with all the political, military,

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and financial risks involved in the exercise of such an avocation and become the police of China?

It will perhaps be said that if the Manchu Dynasty can no longer maintain itself, it may be best to leave it to its fate and allow it to be replaced by another. A new, popular, and strong Government would then appear upon the scene, which would find it easier to observe the engagements imposed upon it.*

But apart from the fact that this new Government might perhaps be very hostile to foreigners and difficult to bring to reason, the Manchus are not yet stripped of all power, and their overthrow would not be effected without a devastating civil war, lasting probably many years. Europe is now too much interested in China to encourage such a catastrophe.

On the other hand, nobody desires the partition of the Celestial Empire. To begin with, the chief eventual rivals are not ready: Russia has not completed her Trans-Siberian Railway; England is hampered with her interminable war in South Africa; the United States, with a large portion of its population opposed to outside extension, insists that no part of the Middle Kingdom shall be closed to them—in other words, that it shall not be dismembered; Japan has not completed her armaments; her finances require careful attention, and she feels, besides, that she cannot act alone. France has every reason for averting a partition, in which her share (the provinces adjoining Tongking) would be a very poor one; and finally, the present insurrectionary movement should prove to the world—including Germany, who took so indiscreet an initiative at Kiao-chau—that it would not be easy to govern the Celestials after

* The position of the Manchu Dynasty in China is somewhat analogous to that of the Shogunate in Japan, which was also caught some forty years ago between the national sentiment and the foreigner. But in Japan, when the Shogunate fell, there remained the divine Emperor, whose prestige covered all the reforms which enlightened statesmen carried out. In China, after the Manchu Dynasty, nothing remains but chaos.

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European methods, and that the mere task of establishing order in a large colony carved out of China might be beyond the strength even of the European Powers.

This being the case, the only policy possible for all countries is to abandon for the present their personal aims, and to endeavour in unison to patch up the Manchu system. To depart from this line of action is to proceed to disaster. But the Powers will have to display some wisdom for a few years to come if this bolstering process is to have the least chance of success. The Court and the populace of the capital should be given a not-easily-forgotten lesson : let the instigators of the proposed murders of the ministers be delivered up and made to pay for their cowardly conduct ; if necessary, even let their bodies be left unburied, which, in the eyes of the Chinese, is the most terrible of all punishments ; let the old Empress be exiled if it should appear necessary to remove her from power. But after all this is done, let the legal order of succession be respected. While putting pressure on the Court to appoint moderate or even slightly progressive men to the head of affairs, avoid a too direct and a too evident interference in the selection of rulers, which would be perilously inadvisable. On the one hand, the Powers would soon cease to act in unison, each considering such and such a grand mandarin more or less its friend and such another its enemy ; and on the other hand, the men chosen would lose all authority, as they would be looked upon as agents of the foreigners. Against this, it is absolutely indispensable that Peking and Tien-tsin should be occupied during several years by a strong garrison, otherwise it will be said that the foreign soldiery have departed through fear, and that the permanent fortification of Ta-ku should be forbidden.

These last measures doubtless involve certain inconveniences, granting the difficulty of maintaining harmony between the various Powers, but if they should be neglected the lesson would risk being too soon forgotten, as were those of 1860 and

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1894-95 ; moreover, they would provide a means of permanent pressure on the Chinese Government.

Nevertheless, if it is important to strike hard at the centre, the more reason have we to refrain from any act calculated to lower in the provinces the prestige and the authority of a regime, the sources of whose weakness are already numerous. The threat of popular risings will continue one of the serious dangers of the position in the Far East ; to avoid them, we must not seize upon the first incident that arises as a pretext for demanding concessions, the extortion of which disturbs and estranges the mandarins, whilst their execution irritates the people. If we do not accept such a course, we run the risk of creating permanent anarchy. The surest way of obtaining tranquillity in China would be a formal, or at any rate a tacit, international understanding binding the Powers for some years not to support at Peking any demand for a concession as long as the greater number of railways now under construction are not completed. That would, moreover, enable European capitalists, who have not been very eager to take up Chinese loans, to ascertain the value of their investments in the Middle Kingdom. We believe that the business and practical sense so highly developed in the Chinese will induce them to become reconciled to the material side of our civilization, but by multiplying simultaneously in every direction preliminary works, say, for railways, we annoy them and wound their susceptibilities before giving them a chance to appreciate the advantage of our innovations, not to mention the economical disturbance arising therefrom.

In conclusion, although patriotism is at a low ebb in the Middle Kingdom and the military spirit still lower, we might, by worrying the Chinese too much, end by creating the one and resuscitating the other. In any case, if the Chinese make bad soldiers—chiefly because they have detestable officers—they are first-class rioters. Wherefore any idea of dividing China, either now or at some future time, seems to us ill-

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advised. Passing events will have taught a useful lesson, should they bring Europe to abandon once and for ever this fatal idea. It was very wisely said in the English Parliament during the present crisis that 'China must be governed by the Chinese and for the Chinese,' which does not mean that it should be governed against the foreigners. Let us hope that all Europe will frankly take to heart this sagacious remark.

PIERRE LEROY-BEAULIEU.

THE AWAKENING OF THE EAST

PART I.—SIBERIA

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF RUSSIAN EXPANSION IN SIBERIA AND THE NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COUNTRY

Antiquity of Russian expansion in Asia, which is contemporary with that of Western Europe in the New World—Analogy between the North of Asia and the North of America—The three natural Zones of Siberia—Their climate, extent and capabilities—The Polar Zone is absolutely sterile and uninhabitable—The Forest Zone—The Meridional Zone, which is both cultivable and colonizable.

No sooner had Russia shaken off the yoke of the Tatars which weighed upon her for three centuries, and left its mark so deeply impressed as to be still visible, than, reformed and united, she began to expand beyond her natural confines. In this she only imitated the example of Spain, which a short time previously had been delivered from the Moors and united under the sceptre of Ferdinand and Isabella. Being essentially a continental country, without easy access to the sea, and having no difficult frontier to bar her expansion to the East, Russia turned her attention in that direction, and, defeating her old masters, annexed the Tatar kingdoms of Kazan and Astrakhan. This conquest extended her frontier to the immediate neighbourhood of the Ural Mountains. In the second half of the sixteenth century Tsar Ivan the Terrible found

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himself possessor of vast but sparsely-peopled regions, at a great distance from his capital, and extremely difficult of direct administration.

It is a remarkable coincidence that under these circumstances an organization should have been formed in Russia almost spontaneously with others of the same kind which were to prove of such great utility in the West—*i.e.*, a great colonizing company, under Imperial charter. The Strogonofs, very rich merchants, who had extended their sphere of trading operations as far as the basin of the Kama, the great affluent of the Volga, addressed in 1558 a petition to the Tsar, in which they demanded a concession of the lands in that region, promising at the same time, in consideration of the grant, to build a city, develop the resources, and defend the country against the attacks of savage tribes. Ivan the Terrible acceded to their request, accorded them divers trading privileges, and conferred upon them the right to administer justice and to levy troops. Thus was organized a regular chartered company analogous with the East India Company and with those more recently formed in South Africa and on the banks of the Niger. The company in question began the conquest of Siberia.

The Strogonofs, once established on the Kama, experienced, as generally happens when a civilized people finds itself in contact with barbarous tribes, the necessity of extending further eastwards at the expense of their Tatar neighbours, if only to protect themselves from their depredations. In 1581 the Tsar gave them permission to employ a celebrated Cossack pirate, Ermak Timoféef,* who seized the city of Sibir, or Isker, then capital of Khan Kuchun, the principal Tatar chief of Western Siberia. Six years later the present city of Tobolsk rose on the site of Sibir.

We will not attempt to narrate the history of the conquest of Siberia, which strongly resembles the taking of North America by French pioneers at about the same time. When the Tatar tribes of the West had been driven towards the Southern Steppes, the Cossacks encountered little opposition from the poor hunters and fishermen whom they found in the district. In summer these Cossack adventurers navigated the rivers in canoes, whilst their winters were spent in block-

* 'Yermak,' the millstone, was the nickname given to Vassil, son of Timothy, a tracker of the Volga, because he ground the corn for his party. He was not a Cossack by birth, but joined the Don Cossack pirates.—H. N.

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houses, or *ostrogs*, surrounded by palisades not unlike the forts erected by the Hudson Bay Company. Soon they became very numerous, being attracted from the more civilized parts of Russia by the growing profits of the fur trade. In 1636 they had reached the mouth of the Yenissei, and a year later arrived on the banks of the Lena. In less than two years—that is, in 1639—they had discovered the shores of the Okhotsk, and fifty years later the whole continent had been traversed from end to end. In 1648 the Cossack adventurers Alexief and Dezhnief doubled the eastern extremity of Asia, and arrived at Kamtchatka, and in 1651 the Ataman Khabarof established himself on the Amur, where he discovered other adventurers, who had already descended this river in 1643. At this juncture the Russians found themselves face to face with the Manchus, who had just conquered China, and notwithstanding the heroic defence of their fortress at Albazine on two occasions, they were obliged in 1688 to abandon the middle and lower basins of the Amur to the Sons of Heaven in accordance with the treaty of Nertchinsk, a territory which they only reconquered from the degenerate Chinese in 1858.

To the west as well as to the east of Siberia the Russian frontiers remained scarcely altered until about the middle of the present century. It was only in 1847 that the Tsar's troops were able to cross the arid zone of the Kirghiz Steppes. The policy of Peter the Great was directed towards Europe, and his dream was to extend Russia towards the West by the conquest of Constantinople—a fact which accounts for the extinction of zeal on the part of Russia with respect to her Asiatic possessions, which were now treated merely as penal settlements or as fields for scientific investigation, whenever the Sovereigns took it into their heads to become specially interested in such matters. The increase of Imperial authority and the more regular organization of the State had in the meantime subdued the adventurous and enterprising spirit of the Cossacks, and that particular class of men, half soldiers, half brigands, who had proved themselves such hardy pioneers at an earlier epoch, now disappeared, and in the middle of the eighteenth century Siberia was opened as a field of colonization. In spite of the many obstacles which the system of serfdom in Russia placed in the way of peasant emigration, in 1851 the population of Siberia had reached 2,400,000, a figure which, although not very large considering the immensity of

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the country, was in excess of the population of Canada at the same period, which numbered only 1,800,000 souls. From this point of view the Russians had no reason to be ashamed of their colonization, and, as a matter of fact, have none to-day. According to the census of January, 1897, there were 5,731,732 Siberians living on a territory of 4,812,800 square miles, whereas in 1891 there were only 4,833,000 Canadians inhabiting the 3,721,800 square miles known as the Dominion. The density of the population of Northern Asia is not much inferior to that of British North America, and it must not be forgotten that the conditions of life in Siberia are greatly inferior to those of Canada.

A comparison of the natural conditions existing in the northern regions of the old and the new world shows that they are nearly identical. Both consist for the most part of vast expanses of flat country, often covered with magnificent forests, and quite as frequently barren. Siberia, like Canada, is irrigated by noble rivers, which under a milder climate would constitute a superb network of intercommunication; but unfortunately both countries are hampered by an extremely rigorous climate, which imprisons these fine rivers during many months of the year under an impenetrably thick coating of ice. In the north of Siberia as well as of Canada the country is so intensely cold as to render agriculture impossible. That part, therefore, of both countries which is capable of exploitation is of extremely limited extent, consisting both in Russian Asia and in British North America of a ribbon-like zone some 3,720 miles in length and from 250 to 300 in width.

If Siberia resembles Canada in some things, it must be confessed that the latter country has every advantage in point of beauty and position. In the first place, Siberia is more to the north; that portion which approaches nearest to the Equator is situated about 43° latitude—that is to say, a little more to the north than the extreme south of Upper Canada, and, being on the Pacific, it is most distant from European Russia, whereas the corresponding part of Canada is the nearest to England, and washed by the Atlantic, the St. Lawrence, and the great lakes. On the other hand, that part of Siberia which is closest to Russia is covered to the south by barren steppes or by mountains which confine the centres of civilization between 54° and 57° latitude. Moreover, whereas the coast of Canada on the Pacific enjoys a much milder climate than the country

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situated on the other side of the Rocky Mountains, the regions of Siberia which border the Great Ocean are just as frigid as the rest of the country. The heights which separate the basin of the Amur from that of the Lena are not sufficiently elevated to form a barrier against piercing north winds, and the Japanese Archipelago interposes itself between the coast and the warm waters of the Black Current, which plays the same part in the Pacific as the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic. Thus it happens that the climate of Trans-Baikalia, where the rivers which, when united, form the Amur take their source, is one of the most rigorous in Siberia, and the sea is covered with ice in the port of Vladivostok, which lies in the same latitude as Marseilles, whereas, opposite on the American coast, seven degrees northward, the winters of British Columbia are not more severe than those of Holland or the West of Germany.

Notwithstanding its terrible climate, Siberia is not entirely uninhabitable; indeed, even on the borders of the Arctic Ocean humanity is represented by a few aboriginal Polar tribes, who wander from place to place in sledges drawn by dogs, and usually followed by a numerous herd of reindeer. The white man, however, cannot endure the conditions prevailing in the extreme north, and it is therefore necessary with a view to colonizing that one must learn to distinguish between the different parts of Siberia.

The country has been judiciously divided into three zones, which are, proceeding from north to south, the Tundra (or Arctic Moss) Zone, the Great Forest Zone, and lastly the Agricultural Zone; the south and south-west of the last-named includes the steppes, as well as the Altai and Sayan Mountains. It would be impossible to trace a line of exact demarcation between these different zones, for the transition is extremely gradual; but, speaking generally, the land situated north of 63° and 64° latitude is barren of all vegetation excepting mosses and lichens. The subsoil is eternally frozen, but the surface thaws in summer very slightly, thereby turning the country into one vast marsh. The rivers remain frozen during nine months of the year. Under these circumstances, cultivation is out of the question. To the south-western limit of this zone, at Beriozof on the Obi, the medium temperature all the year round is 5° C. below zero, and in winter it goes down to 23° . The average in summer is 13.5° , and that of the hottest month 18° , which is about the same as

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the heat in Paris in July; but the warm weather lasts so short a time as to be useless for agricultural purposes. To the east the climate becomes rapidly severe, and at Verkhoyansk, a village situated in the Yakutsk district, latitude 67° , one of the coldest regions in our hemisphere is reached. The average throughout the year is 17° C. below zero; during the three winter months it is 47° , and in January 49° . The minimum is about 68° below zero. What characterizes this dreadful region is that to the extreme cold in winter succeeds a very short but relatively warm summer. The medium thermometrical reading during the warm season is 13° , which rises to 15° for the month of July, during which the mercury sometimes rises to 25° in the shade. The difference between the temperature of the warmest and the coldest months of the year is about 64° , that is to say, four times what it is in Paris. It is very remarkable that in whatever direction you go from Verkhoyansk, even northward, the climate becomes less rigorous, thanks to the comparative mildness of the winter. As to the summer, it scarcely merits the name, falling to 9° and even to 3° C. on the borders of the Arctic Ocean.

In such unfavourable conditions, it is not surprising that the 1,600,000 square miles which comprise the Tundra Zone only support between 60,000 and 80,000 inhabitants, mostly Samoyeds, Ostiaks, Chuckchis, Lamuts, and other miserable Arctic tribes, among whom live, or rather vegetate, a few Russian officials and a fairly numerous group of exiles. The reindeer, whilst serving as a means of transport, is also used as food, and its hide furnishes the natives with clothing. There is no other domestic animal excepting the powerful Polar dog which drags the sleighs. Whether this part of Siberia will ever become of any ultimate use is at present hard to say, but we may take it for granted that it will only be through the discovery of a mineral wealth, the existence of which is unknown at the present time, that the Polar Zone of Siberia will ever attract even a temporary settlement of colonists.

To the south of the Tundra begin the Great Forests. At first the trees are sparse and stunted, and only an experienced botanist can recognise the distinctive characteristics of the larch; the trees, however, become loftier as the climate moderates and the summer lengthens. The larches, firs and pines rise to a great height, and become at last so thick as to prevent the sun drying the damp soil of the Taiga, or primeval

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forest. The banks of the rivers are invariably covered by immense marshes, the most extensive of which are those to be met with in the neighbourhood of the Obi and the Irtysh. When the snow begins to melt, the inundations extend to considerably over six miles on either side of the ill-defined river-banks. The climate of this region is extremely severe, the winters frightfully cold, but the summers fairly warm. The frost lasts only seven instead of eight months; the subsoil, however, is eternally frozen, and agriculture is only possible in certain spots and demands constant attention. It is evident, however, that this zone, which covers about 2,320,000 square miles, that is to say about half Siberia, will never be able to support a dense population; still, with its great forests it is much more valuable than the more northern or Polar regions. If it is possible to prevent these Siberian forests from undergoing the same process of devastation which has befallen those of Northern America, they may become of enormous value. Moreover, there exist in their midst some very important gold-mines, especially near the Yenissei and in the basin of the Olekma, one of the tributaries of the Lena, not a few of which are already being satisfactorily exploited. There is therefore hope that in due time these vast regions now covered with forests and marshes may be able to support a much larger population than the actual one, which does not exceed 700,000 souls, mostly Russians and natives.

If we abstract from the total extent of Siberia the 1,600,000 square miles of Tundra, and the 2,320,000 square miles of forest land, there remain nearly 900,000 square miles which form the cultivable zone, the only one which will ever be capable of supporting anything like a dense population. This region is not perceptibly distinguishable from that of the forests by any marked change in the landscape, unless it be to the west, where the great green trees that usually flourish in milder climes form an agreeable contrast to the everlasting pines and firs. Then, again, the presence of cereals is very noticeable, the late summer being of sufficient length to enable wheat, barley and oats to ripen. So long as the seed remains under the snow it matters little how intense the cold may be above; but when once the snow melts it becomes absolutely necessary for the heat to be sufficiently great during a prolonged period to enable the grain to germinate, and above all it is necessary that the autumnal frosts should not occur

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before the corn has had sufficient time to ripen. At Nertchinsk in Trans-Baikalia the winter is often much more rigorous than at Beriozof on the Obi, and yet corn ripens in the neighbourhood of the first-named town, for the simple reason that the temperature between May and September, although not many degrees higher, remains equable much longer. It is rather to the brief period during which the sun has any power than to the intensity of the heat or the excess of cold that may be attributed the difficulty of rendering these extreme northern regions of any agricultural value. Notwithstanding that the cultivable zone of Siberia is so extremely limited, it covers an area five times the size of France and equal to half the cultivable sphere of Russia in Europe, which is also afflicted with glacial and sterile zones. This more fortunate section of Siberia may, and doubtless will, offer for a long time to come an admirable field for Russian emigration.

CHAPTER II

THE LAND OF SIBERIA AND ITS INHABITANTS

Siberia a prolongation of Russia in Europe—Marked resemblance in scenery and climate between the two countries—Insignificance of the indigenous population, especially towards the West—Facilities of colonization—Preponderance of the Russian element in the agricultural zone—Indigenous elements: Polar tribes diminishing; Mongol population increasing, but much more slowly than the Russian—Asiatic immigration to the east of the cultivable zone—Heterogeneous elements imported from Europe—Jews and Raskolniks.

AFTER crossing the beautifully wooded valleys and the chain of hills known as the Ural Mountains, the traveller arrives at Cheliabinsk, situated in the Great Plain, and can scarcely believe that 1,200 miles of railway separate him from Moscow, so striking is the resemblance between the scenery around him and that of Central Russia, notably in the Governments of Tula and Riazan. In the open spaces rise tufts of delicate verdure, beyond which, here and there, appear the gray outlines of some village, consisting of rows of wooden houses surrounded by fields. The only striking difference between the appearance of this country and Central Russia consists in the predominance of the birch between the Ural and the Obi. For nearly 1,200 miles no other tree shades the absolutely flat country. It is the same with the wild flowers, among which I noticed the *Kaborski tchai*, with its long pink spiral blossoms, which recall those of the *digitalis*. It is not surprising that a Russian territory bearing such a singular resemblance to the mother country should prove attractive to Russian emigrants. The winter here, however, is undoubtedly both longer and colder; the summer is a little hotter, and the mosquitoes much more troublesome; but, on the other hand, land is freer, and the peasant is no longer confined

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in the very narrow space granted in the old country to his father at the time of the emancipation of the serfs, and which, at his death, he has been obliged to share with his brothers. If one is surprised to notice during the first few days' journey by the Trans-Siberian Railway so few villages, the reason is not far to find. The line passes a little to the south of the colonized region, and borders the insufficiently-watered steppes where the Kirghiz graze their cattle. From time to time the traveller perceives in the plain the circular huts and even the tents of these nomads, and not unfrequently at the stations he may meet with a number of them, with their beady black eyes, their yellow complexions, and their closely-shaven heads contrasting picturesquely with the fair locks and long yellow beards of the red-shirted Mujiks. A little to the north, after passing the Obi, the Kirghiz disappear, although the town of Tomsk still possesses a mosque, said to be the most northern in the world.

It is estimated that these Tatars do not exceed 90,000. The majority profess Islamism, whilst a few have been converted to the Orthodox faith, and a smaller proportion still remain pagans. Only a fraction dwell in the towns. Besides this Tatar tribe, some 20,000 Mongols, called Kalmucks, inhabit the Altai Mountains. In the north may still be found other aborigines of a very inferior type, known as Ostiaks. They are supposed to be of Finnish origin, and do not exceed 40,000 in number, and are exclusively engaged in hunting and fishing. It is stated that at one time they were fairly civilized, but they have been gradually driven back by the Russians into the Arctic and sterile regions, and have become decimated by drink and other vices, the unfortunate result of contact with a superior race. Further north of the forest-line and the Tundra region wander a few Polar tribes called Samoyeds, who, owing to the extremely arid nature of the soil and the rigour of the climate, have never come into contact with European civilization. There are about 20,000 of them, and owing to the unfavourable social and climatic conditions under which they exist, it is not likely that they will increase. The purely Russian population, to whom the agricultural zone almost exclusively belongs, forms about nineteen-twentieths of the 3,356,000 inhabitants of Western Siberia, which itself contains three-fifths of the population of all Siberia.

The richest section of the Government of Tobolsk consists

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of a narrow band of land running between the marshes of the northern regions and the sterile steppes of the southern. At Tomsk this cultivable zone widens when it passes the Obi, and the character of the scenery changes to pleasant hills and valleys, in which latter the earth is still sufficiently thick and rich to entirely cover the rocky formation below. The leaf-bearing trees are finer, and are interspersed with splendid specimens of Siberian fir and the extremely picturesque Siberian cedar-tree. Occasionally these trees group themselves together, and form a sort of wood or plantation; at other times they grow singly along the roadside, being thus cultivated in order to supply sleepers for the railway or as superior fuel. The fields are full of beautiful flowers, and the general appearance of the country is that of a fine park, forming a very agreeable contrast to the monotonous Barabinsk Steppe, with its infrequent and stunted birches. The plateau which stretches between the two rivers Tom and Chulym, affluents of the Obi, at a height of between 800 and 900 feet above the level of the plain, is extremely fertile, the vegetation being most varied, and the whole region is vastly superior in point of picturesqueness to any hitherto visited. The valley of the Yenissei, dominated to the east by mountains and traversed by the magnificent river, is extremely beautiful. The water runs rapidly, is remarkably clear, and in more than one place the majestic stream widens to over 1,000 yards.

Once the traveller has passed the Yenissei, he leaves the tedious plains behind him, and finds himself among pleasant hills and valleys, which are rapidly becoming highly cultivated. The post-road, which crosses from the west to the east, from Tiumen, at the foot of the Ural, to Stretensk on the Amur, sometimes follows the course of the rivers, and at others rises to a considerable height above them. On either side rise veritable walls of gigantic Siberian pines, with red trunks, sombre verdure, interspersed by magnificent larches of a lighter shade of green and of more regular shape, and by fir-trees and cedars, whose cones contain those little seeds which the Siberians are so fond of chewing. On the banks of the more important rivers, and at every ten to twenty miles' distance, the traveller now passes numbers of little towns and villages, surrounded by arable land, which form, however, but very insignificant oases in the midst of these interminable forests. It is, however, along this post-road, in the valley of the Yenissei, and

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on the banks of two or three other rivers, that almost the entire population of Central Siberia is concentrated. Here, as elsewhere, the Russian element predominates; for out of the 570,000 inhabitants of the government of Yenissei there are not more than 50,000 natives, who, moreover, live principally in the forests to the north.

The population of the Government of Irkutsk includes about 500,000 inhabitants, of whom 100,000 are Buriats, mostly shepherds and farmers. They were originally Mongols, and still practise Buddhism, and live principally on the slopes of the Sayan chain of mountains, which runs close to the Chinese frontier. To the east of the great Lake Baikal, which is 440 miles in length by 30 to 60 in width, and which by reason of its mountainous shores recalls the lakes of Scotland, is a region that contains the only really beautiful scenery in Siberia. This section of the country has always entertained close relations with China. Trans-Baikalia in former times supplied the Emperors at Peking with their finest game. The whole district of the Verkhne-Udinsk, comprising the basin of the Selenga, the principal affluent of the Baikal, is frequently and not inappropriately called Russian Mongolia. On the summit of the Ahmar Dabam, a chain of mountains which dominates Lake Baikal, I perceived for the first time a fetish-tree with its branches bedecked with parti-coloured rags. On the eastern slope I also discovered a Lamasery. The scantily cultivated plateau to the north, which is watered by the Vitim, a tributary of the Lena, was, it appears, not populated at the time of the arrival of the Russians, and even to-day it only contains a few villages peopled by wretched Mujiks. This region before the annexation of the right bank and of the lower valley of the Amur was used as a sort of military encampment. At the present time it is governed by a military régime, whose administration is concentrated in the hands of a Governor, invariably a general in the army. Of the 670,000 inhabitants, one-third are natives, one-third peasants, or inhabitants of its gloomy little towns, and the other third consists of Cossacks, who are only distinguishable from the peasants by wearing a yellow band on their caps and trousers. Instead of paying taxes, they have to submit to certain military obligations. Although they are Cossacks by name and by race, they possess none of the brilliant military qualities which distinguish their European kinsmen. The two territories annexed

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by Russia in 1858 at the expense of China, the Province of the Amur, and the southern portion of the Littoral Province—the only one which is of the least value—are scarcely inhabited, and were even less peopled at the time of the arrival of the Russians, when they possessed not more than 10,000 Manchus, and about as many natives, engaged in hunting and fishing, and belonging to several declining tribes. The Manchus have remained and are prospering; the other tribes are gradually passing away. Some 20,000 or 30,000 Korean and Chinese emigrants have settled in the neighbourhood of Vladivostok. The Russian immigration, however, forms at least five-sixths of the 112,000 inhabitants of the Province of the Amur, and more than two-thirds of the 214,000 of the coast province, of whom 30,000 natives live in the Arctic regions, where the whites leave them in peace. The newly-acquired Chinese territory includes at least 140,000 Russians out of the 175,000 inhabitants. It must, however, be remembered that this remarkable majority is mainly due to the concentration of troops which has taken place since the Chino-Japanese War, which so profoundly modified the political condition of the Far East.

The following table is formed from official sources—chiefly from the census taken on January 28, 1897, and marks the area and the total population of the nine Siberian provinces :

	Square Miles.	Total Population.	Natives and other Asiatics.	Area of Agricultural Zone, Square Miles.
Tobolsk	536,600	1,438,655 }	180,000	270,800
Tomsk	328,000	1,917,527 }		
Yenissei	987,400	567,807	45,000 }	193,400
Irkutsk	280,800	501,237	100,000 }	
Yakutsk	1,535,900	283,954	250,000	
Trans-Baikalia ...	229,800	669,721	200,000	139,200
Amur	172,900	112,396	18,000	104,000
Littoral		{ 214,940 }		
Island of Sakhalin }	741,400	{ 25,495 }	70,000	147,000
Total	4,812,800	5,731,732	863,000	854,400

The southern agricultural region of Siberia, in contradistinction to the frozen zone to the north, is mainly inhabited

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by European settlers. The proportion of these over the native population is greatest in the west, and decreases towards the east, where, however, it still remains superior by about two-thirds, so that we need not hesitate to conclude that out of the 5,000,000 people living on this long strip of land, more than four million and a half are of European origin. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that the indigenous Mongol and Turki population, which is immensely superior to the poor tribes of fishermen and hunters who wander about the northern zone, does not diminish, but continues to increase, much less rapidly, however, than the Russians, who are constantly being reinforced by emigration. Fortunately the feeling between these two distinct elements is excellent; the Russians, being of Oriental extraction, do not hold those racial prejudices which are so marked among the Anglo-Saxons. The religious question, which is of course an obstacle to any attempt at a fusion between the Orthodox and the Buddhist population, is also not very intense or intricate. The Russian is essentially tolerant, in opposition to his Government, which is the reverse. The Orthodox emigrants have no objection to a Pagoda or a Lamasery being erected alongside of their own churches and monasteries. I remember seeing, while travelling from Cheliabinsk to Omsk, the Metropolitan of the last-named town, who happened to be in the train, get out at a certain station to visit a church which was being built, and to bestow his benediction upon a crowd of Mujiks who had assembled for the purpose of receiving it. Whilst the ceremony was in progress, a few feet further on five Tatar travellers had stretched their carpets, and, with their faces turned Meccawards, were going through the elaborate gymnastics connected with Mussulman devotion. The Mujiks, who were crowding forward to kiss their priest's hand, never dreamt of disturbing the Mohammedan worshippers, but watched them quite respectfully. I doubt very much whether in any part of Europe three centuries ago, when the populace was not more developed in the intellectual sense than are these poor Mujiks, such a scene of tolerance could ever have been witnessed. The Russian Government accords the utmost liberty to its subjects in Asia in matters of religion. The origin of Russian official intolerance in Europe is in the main purely political, and if it considers Buddhists and Mussulmans in Siberia less objectionable than Catholics and Protestants, it is

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simply because the followers of these divergent creeds are the representatives of former and very dangerous enemies, and are, moreover, perpetually endeavouring to impose their doctrine upon anyone with whom they come into contact.

The Russian colonization of Siberia has been carried out without the aid of any other European nationality. There are only a few hundred other Europeans settled in the country, the greater number of whom are French people. I was much amused at the little station at Sokur, about nine leagues from the Obi, to find a buffet kept by a Frenchwoman, a peasant who had married a Bessarabian, and who had only been in Siberia a year, after having, however, spent several in Southern Russia. Her buffet was arranged with a greater degree of taste and comfort than those in charge of the Russians, who, however, keep everything scrupulously neat and clean. The worthy lady had forgotten her fluent French, but had not yet acquired fluent Russian. At Tomsk I fell in with another Frenchwoman, who kept a bookshop, and in nearly all the towns along the great post-road at Irkutsk, Blagovyeschensk, Khabarovsk, and Vladivostok, I found French shopkeepers, some of whom had been thirty years in the country. They seemed to entertain a distinct preference for photography.

Now that Siberia is at last thrown open to civilization, foreigners will, of course, become much more numerous, and already many engineers are to be found in various parts of the mining districts; but for all this, I do not think that at any period the Russian colony will be greatly influenced thereby.

We may, therefore, conclude that, from the ethnological point of view, as well as from the geographical, Siberia is merely a prolongation of Russian Europe, or of what is known as Greater Russia. It is true that a few heterogeneous elements exist of the same sort as those to be met with in Russia itself: Poles and Germans from the Baltic provinces, and the descendants of exiles, or even exiles themselves; and thus it comes to pass that in all the larger towns, at Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk and Irkutsk, Catholic and Lutheran churches abound. On the other hand, there are synagogues in nearly all the secondary towns. Israel is fully represented in Siberia, and the little town of Kainsk between the Omsk and the Obi is popularly known as the Jerusalem of Siberia. There are also about 100,000 Raskolniks, followers of a reform which took place in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church in the

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seventeenth century. This, however, is, needless to say, a purely Russian contingent. The Raskolniks exist in every part of Siberia, but in the province of the Amur they form about a tenth of the population, and are also very numerous in Trans-Baikalia. They are mainly the descendants of people belonging to this particular sect, who were originally exiled from Russia in the eighteenth century. Their chief peculiarity consists in their love of temperance and horror of every sort of innovation. Nothing would induce them to take even a cup of coffee or tea. In our time the members of certain curious sects, that of the Eunuchs, for instance, are exiled into Siberia, and confined to a village in the territory of the Yakutsk, in the Tundra Zone. According to the belief of these eccentric persons, Napoleon I. was a reincarnation of the Messiah, and they believe he rests in the sleep of death on the shores of Lake Baikal until a time when an angel shall awaken him and place him at the head of an amazing host destined to establish the reign of God in all parts of the world. The Raskolniks, owing to their temperate habits and their industry, are generally considered to be a very valuable element in the population of the country.

CHAPTER III

AGRICULTURAL SIBERIA AND THE RURAL POPULATION

Enormous preponderance of the rural and peasant population in Siberia—Siberian Mujiks—Their rude and primitive manner of life—Excellent quality of the land, and backward methods of cultivating it—Mediocre and irregular manner of raising cereals—The necessity and difficulty of improving agricultural operations—The absence of large and enterprising ownership in Siberia a disadvantage.

SIBERIA resembles Russia not only in the matter of its immensity, its loneliness, the duration of its winters, monotonous expanse of its plains and enormous forest lands, but also in the leading characteristics of its peasantry; but in Asia and Russia these seem accentuated, possibly by reason of the peculiarity of the surroundings among which they are compelled to live. Even more than in Russia is this class of the people essentially rural; the exploitation of the gold-mines is the only other industry of any importance, and it employs relatively few people in comparison with its yield.

In Siberia great landlords are conspicuous by their absence. The only nobles mentioned by the official statistics are a few functionaries whose lands will be found on the other side of the Ural, and the only rich people in the country are the merchants residing in the towns, who occasionally add to their incomes, mainly derived from trade, by a certain interest in mining speculations. Some of these worthy people build themselves handsome country houses, but they do not take much interest in agriculture. A few concessions of land were made in the middle of the century, but they have long since passed out of the hands of their original owners into those of the Mujiks, to whom they have been 'let,' but these do not appear to care about their prosperity. All the rest of the land

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belongs either to the Government or to small farmers, who rent it from the Crown.

The Siberian peasant lives exactly as do his brethren in Russia, in villages or hamlets. Isolated houses are rare, the agglomeration of dwellings being an absolute necessity of the conditions of that collective and communal proprietorship which prevails throughout the Tsar's dominions. A Siberian village is, therefore, a reproduction of a Russian village. On either side of the road is a succession of low, one-story houses built of dark wood, and separated from each other by yards, at the back of which are the stables. The appearance of these dwellings is exceedingly dreary, for they are invariably built of rough wood, blackened by age. Occasionally, however, some few planks are painted a vivid white. The usual doleful aspect of these villages is sometimes enlivened, especially in the larger ones, by the presence of a brick church, with cupolas painted a vivid green. In the hamlets these chapels are only outwardly distinguished from the rest of the *isbas* by an iron cross.

If anything, the general appearance of these Siberian villages is even more dreary and depressing than that of their counterparts in European Russia, where the houses are often gaily painted. Here they are built entirely of unhewn wood, like the log-huts of the Far West. Then, the few domestic animals to be seen wandering about the roadway are not reassuring, for the dogs look like wolves, and the enormous black pigs like wild boars. Nevertheless, I am of opinion that the Siberian peasant is better off than his Russian brother. His *isbas* are certainly more spacious, although, to be sure, six, seven, and even ten, persons are usually crowded into two or three tiny rooms, the immense stove in the centre of which, in winter, is usually used as a bedstead by the entire family, whereby whatever air otherwise might be admitted is hermetically excluded. For all that, I have never seen in Siberia any of those miserable hovels to be found in Russia, but undoubtedly the manners and customs of the Siberian peasants are even more primitive than those of the Russians. They possess less knowledge of hygiene and cleanliness, and are absolutely ignorant of everything calculated to render life in the least degree agreeable or rational. During the six winter months the Siberian keeps his house rigorously shut, excluding even a breath of air; in summer he does the same, for the double

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windows of the two or three very small sleeping-rooms are never opened on any pretext. These Siberian peasants are, moreover, astonishingly lazy and apathetic. Their only pleasure in life consists in dreaming away the time whilst smoking their pipes, and in drinking *vodka*, not to enliven themselves, but simply to get dead-drunk. Whilst the men are at the public-house the women stand by their open doors, listless and gossiping, indolently watching their fair-haired children, who, with only a red shirt on, fabricate the time-honoured dirt-pies of universal childhood in the mud or else roll about in the dust. Work is limited to what is absolutely indispensable, and the Siberian peasant is much happier doing nothing than in working to obtain what his fellows in other countries would consider the necessities of life, but which he looks upon as ludicrously superfluous. Every village possesses a herd of cows, which you may watch in the early morning hours straggling off to the pastures, driven along by two or three old men or urchins, and although you can always get excellent milk, butter is very scarce, and cheese unknown. As to a garden, even for the cultivation of necessary vegetables, I have never seen one in the hundred villages I have visited, excepting, indeed, in Trans-Baikalia, where I perceived one or two attached to the *stanitsas* belonging to some Cossacks. It is not because vegetables will not grow, but because the peasants will not cultivate them. In the towns in the Amur district, such as Blagovyeshchensk, Khabarovsk, and a few others, vegetables are to be obtained, but even these are brought over by the Chinese from the opposite bank of the river.

In addition to laziness, the Siberian peasant adds the most surprising obstinacy, which is not precisely a bad quality, when, as in the case of the English, it serves to increase their dogged activity; but in Siberia it is simply another incentive to do nothing. Once a Siberian peasant has made up his mind to play *dolce far niente*, no power, Divine or human, will induce him to budge. I have often heard Europeans say that Siberia is the only country where you cannot get work done even for money; and this is perfectly true, for on certain holidays it matters little what you may offer, you will not get a coachman to take you a five-mile drive. The Siberian would rather lose money than earn it against his will.

If inertia is happiness, then the Siberians must be the happiest people on earth. They disdain progress and would

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rather die than better their condition. Their motto is, 'What sufficed for our fathers is surely good enough for us,' and this is the invariable answer a peasant will give you if you venture to suggest any sort of change for the better in his condition. His favourite texts from Holy Scripture are those which flatter his habit of intellectual stagnation, those which preach resignation and abstinence, but certainly not those which teach action and effort. 'He who is contented with little will not be forgotten by God,' was the text I once saw stuck up in the waiting-room of one of the dirtiest stations in Trans-Baikalia. It struck me as being particularly appropriate, both to the place and the people. The prevailing lack of energy and perseverance, which has been noticed by travellers in every part of the Tsar's Empire, seems to me to be one of the radical characteristics of the Russian nature. It may possibly derive its origin from the influences of Tatar blood, which was so largely infused among the lower classes of Russians from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century at the time of Tatar domination. Then, again, it must be remembered that extreme cold, like extreme heat, produces apathy, especially upon the men, who are thereby condemned to remain for many months inactive, and whose minds, owing to their excessive ignorance, are a blank.

Siberian peasants are supremely ignorant. In 1894 the Government of Tobolsk, the most progressive of any in respect of education, numbered only 19,100 children frequenting the schools out of a population of 1,400,000 souls. In the towns the proportion of scholars was 4·63 per 100, but in the country districts it did not rise to 1·05. One must not, however, be too severe on the Siberians for showing so poor an educational result, for we must not forget the enormous distance between village and village, and the difficulties of obtaining schoolmasters, owing mainly to the excessive ignorance in which the lower orders of Russians are plunged. Notwithstanding the very considerable progress which has been made in this direction in the last few years, there is probably no country in the world where reading and writing would be of greater advantage, for during at least one half of the year the Siberian has literally nothing to do but to think, or, better, to dream, his life away.

Serfdom has never existed in Siberia, which accounts for the Mujiks having a much more independent air than their brethren in European Russia. They have, however, in common with

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these latter, that peculiar sort of charity which has been well called the 'pity of the Slav.' It is, however, not an active virtue, but a sort of dreamy pitifulness which induces these poor people to help each other, but does not prevent them from being exceedingly suspicious of strangers. They will, however, invariably leave on the sill outside their windows a hunk of bread or a jug of milk for the benefit of some escaped convict or some wretched outcast. Unfortunately, however, the extreme ignorance and the innate laziness of these people prevent their extracting from the soil much that, at a very small cost of labour, would greatly increase both their wealth and their comfort.

The soil of Siberia is exceedingly rich. The famous *tchernoziom*, or black earth of Southern Russia, covers a great part of the Meridional Zone of the provinces of Tobolsk and Tomsk. The upper valleys of the Obi and the Yenissei, sheltered from the north-winds, enjoy a milder climate than the plains, and are excellent for the growth of all sorts of cereals. On the borders of the Angara, the great tributary of Lake Baikal and on that of the Lower Amur, and its tributary rivers and its affluents, which are marshy, there are enormous tracts of extremely fertile land, but the methods of cultivation are of the most primitive. Then, again, the vast majority of the rural population obstinately refuses to work in the fields. All along the great postal highway, which stretches from the Ural to the Amur, and beyond to Kiakhta, the manner in which the peasants earn their living is considerably modified. They exist by trafficking along this main road, along which pass manufactured goods imported from Europe, which are forwarded to Central Siberia, the great caravans of the tea-merchants, the gangs of exiles, and lastly the ordinary travellers. As this road is the only one which goes from west to east, it is very animated. Even in summer, when the traffic is not so active—the tea caravans only pass in winter—I have rarely seen fewer than 100 transports of one sort or another per day. Although every postmaster is obliged to keep no fewer than forty horses, and each carriage rarely requires more than three, occasionally it is impossible to secure a conveyance, and one is obliged to ask the peasants for assistance, which they are very ready to afford, making you pay from three to four roubles (six to eight shillings) for a relay of twenty-five *versts* (sixteen miles), a sum which, if they see that they have to deal either with somebody

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who is in a great hurry, or with a wealthy traveller, they persistently increase in the most barefaced manner. In winter the transport of tea also enables them to make considerable sums of money.

Thus it is that the country folk in these latitudes neglect agriculture, considering it merely as an accessory. In the neighbourhood of the villages you will find a few fields and pastures, where the cows, horses, and sometimes a few black sheep, are sent out to graze under the care of two or three boys or old men, or sometimes without any shepherd at all. A wooden barrier prevents their escaping into the neighbouring forest.

The number of horses in Siberia is very great. In the government of Tomsk in 1894 there were 1,360,000 horses to a population of only 1,700,000, that is to say, 80 horses per 100 inhabitants. In the government of the Yenissei the proportion is over 90 per 100 inhabitants, and the same proportion prevails in the government of Irkutsk. Almost the only other country where there are almost as many horses as men is, besides Russian Central Asia, the Argentine Republic, where there are 112 per 100 inhabitants. In the United States there are but 22, and in France only 7. The proportion of horned cattle is also very considerable, being about 60 per 100 inhabitants, rising in Eastern Siberia, in Tobolsk and Tomsk, to 80, whereas in the Yenissei and Irkutsk districts there are about 3 beasts per family. The greater part of these are cows. Bullocks are very scarce, not being employed either for food or burden. It is only along the Kirghiz Steppes, in the country traversed by the Trans-Siberian railway between the Urals and Omsk, and the region immediately below this line, that milk is used. The rain falls in this region very slightly, and the land is not cultivable, but purely arable, and as the Kirghiz are extremely capable herdsmen, the results are very satisfactory, and they export their cattle largely into Russian Europe, and even beyond. I remember coming across a train full of bullocks which were being conveyed to St. Petersburg, and I know of at least one large house in Moscow which receives weekly from the little town of Kurgan, situated on the railway line, many thousands of pounds of butter, a great part of which is exported thence to Hamburg.

If one wishes to become acquainted with the real Siberian farmers, one must leave aside the highroads and plunge

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into the country. True, the villages become much less numerous, but then they are surrounded by more extensive fields. In those districts which were first colonized in the Government of Tobolsk some rather thickly-peopled places are occasionally to be found, especially in the northern steppe between 55° and 58° latitude. In the Government of Tomsk a more inhabited region will likewise be met with to the south of the zone of the immense but well-wooded marshlands ; but in this province, as in that of the Yenissei, the southern portion, instead of being covered by sterile steppes, contains the magnificently wooded valleys of the upper Obi, the Yenissei, and their affluents, which very naturally attract the greater number of Russian emigrants.

The agricultural resources in the districts of Barnaul, Biisk, Minusinsk and Kansk, are extremely rich, and, besides excellent land, splendid water, and a relatively mild and agreeable climate, there are a variety of minerals. More to the east, if we wish to avoid the ever-silent desert, or the *taiga*, we must, on leaving the highroad, enter some of the valleys at the foot of the mountains on the Chinese frontier, on the borders of which the whole population is at present concentrated. The aspect of this region, however, differs very little from that crossed by the post-road between Irkutsk to the great prison of Alexandrof, where we behold fine wheat-fields and herds of cattle wherever there is an opening in the thick but marshy woodlands. Excepting for the extent of the cultivated lands which surround them, the appearance of the villages, however, does not change in the least. There is never a vestige of a garden or of any sort of verdure near the houses, unless, indeed, it be a few flowers growing in pots, which are never arranged on the ledge outside the window, but in the interior, and form, together with a few ikons and the portraits of their Imperial Majesties, the only attempt at ornamentation indulged in by the inhabitants of these essentially comfortless and inartistic dwellings.

The only crops of the least value in Siberia are those of the various cereals, of which about 150,000,000 bushels are harvested, mostly in the western part of the country, which is not only the most thickly populated, but also the freest of forests.

The rest of Siberia, that is to say, the provinces watered by the Amur and the territory of the Irkutsk, which are very thinly

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peopled, does not produce a total of more than 5,500,000 bushels. Wheat, generally sown in spring, and oats form each about 30 per cent. of the total cereal product of Siberia. The balance is made up of rye, barley and buckwheat. The arable land has to undergo, especially when first reclaimed from the steppe, the usual process of preparation, manuring, etc. The Siberian peasants have not acquired even the most rudimentary knowledge of agricultural science, and, consequently, often have to abandon their farms. On the other hand, in certain favourable regions, in the Governments of Tobolsk and Tomsk, where the earth is exceptionally rich, the pastures have gone on fairly well for over a hundred years without any sensible diminution in the excellence of their grazing properties. However, land is so abundant in Siberia that often the peasants, when they find after they have reclaimed it that its productive qualities decrease, rather than be bothered with a repetition of the processes of manuring, etc., pack up their traps and migrate elsewhere, literally, to 'fresh woods and pastures new,' where probably the foot of man has never trod.

In Siberia, as stated already, great landowners are non-existent. The soil is, therefore, exclusively in the hands of the peasants, but up to the present the *mir* collective communal propertyship, as is found throughout Russia, is quite exceptional, and then only in the more sparsely peopled parts of the west. Since 1896, however, the Government has decided to introduce, if not practically, at least theoretically, the *mir* principle as it exists in European Russia. Nevertheless, in Siberia the commune is not supposed to possess property, but simply to hold it on the principle of usufruct, the whole land belonging to the Crown. In those parts of the country which are nearly uninhabited the *zaimka* system still holds good, whereby a peasant, although he may be a resident in a village, is allowed to build himself a hut on the steppe or in the forest where he passes the summer, and where he can cultivate and even enclose one or two large fields which are supposed to belong to him, and which he can sell or give away as he pleases, and which, in point of fact, he owns by right of being the first occupant; but this system is only provisional. With the increase of population it gives place to another, whereby the peasant is not considered an absolute proprietor, but only for so long as he chooses to cultivate his land properly. From the moment he ceases to comply with this condition another

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man can take his land. Everybody is allowed to cut hay in the prairies where he likes, and the pastures and woods are common property. On the other hand, it is forbidden to enclose any forest or pasture-land.

The climate of Siberia is naturally opposed to the cultivation of cereals, which have to struggle against droughts, autumnal fogs, and late and early frosts. During the last ten years some very interesting meteorological observations have been made at Irkutsk, whereby it has been discovered that July is the only month in which it never freezes. Then, again, in the government of Tobolsk, and to the west of that of Tomsk, in addition to these climatic drawbacks, the crops are often devastated by myriads of *kobylkas*, a sort of locust or grasshopper which comes from the Kirghiz Steppes. Under these circumstances, agriculture in Siberia may well be said to be an even more arduous way of earning a livelihood than it is in Russia proper. It not unfrequently happens that the crops fail utterly, and during the last ten years it has been noticed that these disasters are mainly due to increasing impoverishment of the soil. The irregular condition of the crops is all the more disastrous in Siberia because of the lack of means of communication which impedes the easy transport of corn from one district to another, and results in enormous fluctuations in prices, that often spell ruin to the unfortunate peasants. The introduction of the railway to Irkutsk occasioned a notable reduction in the price of bread in Eastern Siberia, but, on the other hand, the principal line, unfortunately, transports agricultural products from Siberia to the region of the Volga.

But a matter which is even of greater importance than that of intercommunication are the extremely antiquated methods of cultivation which the peasants insist upon retaining. In the first place, their notions of preparing the reclaimed soil for culture are absolutely barbarous. All they do is to scratch up the immediate surface of the earth with a sort of plough which dates from the Iron Age, and then sow their crop. When the field is exhausted, which, not having been properly manured, it very soon is, it is abandoned for a period of years until it recovers some of its reproductive qualities. With improved agricultural implements the earth could be more deeply ploughed, and at a very little distance beneath the surface it is almost invariably extremely rich. The question is how to induce the peasants to change methods which have been handed down to

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them from their ancestors through the ages. It is of course much to be regretted that in Siberia there exists no great land-owners wealthy enough to introduce modern improvements, and thus teach their humbler neighbours the value of progress by practical illustration; but until means of communication are facilitated and improved it will be difficult to induce men of wealth and education to settle in a country which, however naturally rich it may be, is, to say the best of it, exceptionally unattractive. Even in Russia, where so many noblemen, owing to the great losses which they sustained at the time of the emancipation of the serfs, have abandoned their lands to the peasants, and have retired to the larger towns, there are yet to be found men who have had the courage to face reverses, and who have taken their estates in hand on scientific principles, introducing the latest improvements in agricultural implements, and thereby have influenced for the better the peasantry by even inducing some of them to abandon their primeval methods of agriculture. This desirable state of affairs, however, cannot exist in Siberia, at least for the present. Then, again, there is another advantage which would accrue from the presence of rich land-owners in Siberia, namely, contact with persons of superior education and culture, which in the end would doubtless affect the peasantry for the better. In Russia the peasantry form a compact body which, by reason of its singular position in the social sphere, is absolutely unable to receive or absorb any influences from the more educated classes. This is a state of affairs which it is highly desirable should cease in the Asiatic colonies, where at present it is even more strongly marked than in Russia itself. The problem of the future of Siberia is the possibility and feasibility of inducing important land-owners to settle in the country.

CHAPTER IV

MINERAL RESOURCES AND INDUSTRIES

Importance of the Siberian mines—The gold mines—Insufficiency of organization principally due to unfavourable climatic influences—Railway extension would bring about an increase in the value of the mining industries—Silver, copper, and iron mines.

HOWEVER productive Siberia may eventually become, it can never solely depend for its prosperity upon its agricultural resources. Happily, the subsoil is richer than the upper crust, on account of the great abundance of ore of various kinds which it conceals. The gold and silver mines, however, alone, up to the present, have been worked to any extent, although a few of the iron mines have been slightly exploited. Even in the case of gold, however, only the alluvial mines have been touched in those valleys where gold exists, and nowhere have the rock veins been opened. More can hardly be expected in a country which is nearly destitute of the proper means of transport; hence the extreme difficulty of conveying the necessarily heavy and elaborate machinery required for the extraction of the gold from the rock. Then, again, the rock ore is only to be found at great distances from inhabited centres in unexplored forests and mountainous regions. The diggings, on the other hand, are much easier, demanding no other implements than a sieve and a spade. The siftings have been exploited in great numbers from end to end of Siberia, their takings proving, since 1895, equal to two-thirds of the gold product of the whole of the Russian Empire, the fourth largest gold-centre in the world, coming immediately after the United States, Australia, and the Transvaal. The amount of gold abstracted from the Siberian mines since 1895 amounts to not less than £5,000,000, and this figure, high as

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it is, is, in all probability, much under the mark, the miners very often retaining a good deal of their findings for themselves. The Government is the only buyer of Siberian gold. It has the right to claim on purchasing the gold from the miners between 15 and 20 per cent. of the ore. This system of taxation is extremely pernicious, since it tempts the miners, as already stated, to conceal the real amount of their takings. An increase in the surface tax would compensate for the suppression of the official claim upon the net product, and would put an end to a great deal of fraud. I have been assured that a reform in this sense may soon be expected. The enforced obligation of selling to the State becomes, in the long-run, exceedingly irksome to concessionaires, because it forces them to send their gold to a great distance, to the laboratories at Tomsk and Irkutsk, where the official agents analyze it to determine its value, whereas, of course, it would be much simpler to send it direct to Europe, and there sell it to speculators who would promptly pay the price demanded. Another drawback in the present system is that the miners have often to wait a long time for ready cash, which is absolutely necessary to them in their business. Sometimes the Government keeps them waiting until their gold has reached St. Petersburg, and they are ultimately obliged to discount it according to the very high tariff rates prevailing in Siberia. The transport of the metal to Europe by the State is as expensive as it is troublesome, since it has to be conveyed to Moscow and St. Petersburg in charge of a military escort. I have on several occasions seen between the Yenissei and Lake Baikal carts bringing gold from the mines, escorted by three or four soldiers ready to fire on the least signs of possible attack. Another drawback to the Siberian mining industries are the primitive implements used in abstracting the ore from the soil, which, as M. Levat, a distinguished engineer, very truly observed to me, were of a sort that apparently dated from the days of Homer. Under these circumstances, it is the custom in Siberia to work the surface of the mine only, and after enough ore has been extracted from it, to abandon the place entirely.

Owing to the geological formation of the country, the more important Siberian mines will not be found, as in California, on the mountain slopes, but at depths covered by marshlands. Their exploitation, therefore, is much more costly, as it is necessary before commencing operations to cart away an

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immense quantity of the upper surface of the earth. Hence it happens that if a mine is disturbed at the surface, and then abandoned by the miners, it is, so to speak, spoilt, as any attempt to work it again in all probability will result in disappointment. For this reason, many excellent mines in the basin of the Obi and of the Yenissei have been already exhausted, and the centre of the mining industry in these regions has been transferred to the banks of the Amur and the Lena, and this notwithstanding the many difficulties the miners have to face, as the soil hereabouts is invariably frozen for about twenty yards in depth, and work can only be pursued for about 120 consecutive days in the year. The miners' salaries, too, are exceedingly high. In the diggings at Olekma, an affluent of the Lena, wages are 3s. 4d. per diem, that is to say, double what they are on the Yenissei, and eight times as much as in the neighbourhood of Senipalatinsk, where the Kirghiz workmen receive only fivepence. Notable progress, however, has been made in these regions during the last few years, as the mines are gradually leaving the hands of adventurers and small associations, to be concentrated in those of important companies, financed by the richer Siberian merchants, and even by large Russian firms. The great mining company of Olekma extracted in 1880 £1,000,000 worth of gold, and maintained its reputation at £680,000 in 1896, proving this mine to be one of the richest in the world. With the introduction of proper means of transport, and, above all, a liberal reform in the legislation, doubtless the Siberian mines would become infinitely more valuable than they are at present.

Already European capitalists are paying attention to Asiatic Russia, and one or two important groups of French mining engineers during the past three years have been inspecting those parts of the country which are said to be richest in ore. I was never more surprised than to find on board a boat on the Amur two English engineers, whose acquaintance I had made in December, 1895, in the far-away goldfields of the Transvaal. All that the mines of Siberia need to become of enormous value are sufficient capital and up-to-date methods of working them. The silver mines of Nertchinsk, which in old times had an unenviable reputation as the site of the most terrible Siberian penal settlement, are now of little value. On the other hand, copper, iron, and coal beds are distributed in great abundance in various parts of the country, and seem to

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constitute its principal and most permanent source of wealth. The copper mines have not been exploited at all, but are known to exist in the Upper Yenissei, in the districts of the Minusinsk, celebrated throughout Siberia for its agricultural prosperity ; others may be discovered more to the west, on the Irtysh. Iron is found in great quantity in the western regions, in the Altai Mountains, on the borders of the Yenissei, and in the valley of the Angara, and to the east in Trans-Baikalia, where its iron mines have been fairly well exploited, but hitherto not on any considerable scale. Coal will certainly be found in considerable abundance in the western plains, and in the last few years a vast coal area has been found, beginning about 150 miles south of the Trans-Siberian line near the town of Kuznetsk, and extending to the Upper Obi. In 1887 a new and still larger field was discovered at about 80 miles east of Tomsk, and, moreover, close to the railway line. At the extremity of Siberia, near Vladivostok, and, consequently, close to the sea, other coal-beds have been opened of late.

Siberian industries are at present very limited, and consist of a few unimportant distilleries, breweries, brick-kilns, match manufactories, etc. It is therefore evident that for some long time to come the inhabitants will be compelled to devote their attention and energies to the development of the natural products of the soil. All new countries are forced to do this in the first stages of their civilization, and since the United States, New Zealand, and Australia failed in manufactures in their earlier days, Siberia may surely content herself by following in their wake.

CHAPTER V

SIBERIAN COMMERCE AND THE TRANSPORT OF TEA

Special character of trade in Siberia—Importance of the tea transport—Kiakhta—The annual arrival of tea at the Irkutsk Customs-house—Road followed by the tea caravan—Dilatory and expensive methods of transport—Comparison between the land road viâ Kiakhta and the sea route viâ Odessa—Other articles of commerce, exportation of cereals, etc.

COMMERCE is much more important in Siberia than either agriculture or manufacture, and forms the basis of all the great fortunes that have been made in the country. Siberian commerce is mainly concerned with transport, and if we except the traffic in gold by the Government, the only other objects of export are cereals and furs. The importation, on the other hand, is very limited, consisting merely of manufactured articles necessary for the material comfort of a very scanty and primitive population, whose wants are correspondingly few. The commerce of the country would be infinitesimal were it not that nearly all the tea consumed in Russia passes through Siberia.* Tea in Russia occupies even a more important position than it does in England. The average Russian takes between a dozen and fifteen cups per day, and he will not travel without his tea, tea-pot, and his sugar, and the *samovar*, a sort of glorified kettle, is never absent from every table in Russia, and is always full of hot water ready to moisten the leaves of the plant that comforts but does not intoxicate. The Russians make their infusion very weak, pouring the boiling water a great many times over the same leaves. The peasantry, unlike the English of the lower classes, who like their tea very strong, use the same leaves over and

* The import of Ceylon tea into Russia is already large, and is increasing rapidly.—H. N.

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over again until the decoction ends by being only straw-coloured water. This explains the fact that whilst the Russians drink three times as much tea as the English, the quantity of it imported into Russia is at least two-thirds less than that which China and India send annually to Great Britain.

It was by the overland route that the Russians first came in contact with the Chinese somewhere towards the end of the seventeenth century, and their commerce with the Celestial Empire continued until the middle of the present century exclusively overland. Almost all the tea which enters Russia has to pass through the town of Kiakhta, about 180 miles south-east of Irkutsk as the crow flies, but 430 miles by the postal-road, which is only used during two short periods of the year, the first in December and the second in spring, when, owing to the quantity of ice on Lake Baikal, navigation is impossible. During the rest of the year the tea is transported across the lake, in winter on sledges, and in summer by steamers, whereby not less than 93 miles are gained. Occasionally, as, for instance, on the banks of the Solenga, the road rises to about 4,000 feet above the level of Lake Baikal. Here the scenery becomes extremely fine, and the traveller obtains between the branches of the magnificent trees glimpses of the beautiful lake far below, forming a very welcome change to the monotony of the plain in which the caravans spend the greater part of their journey. Kiakhta consists of three parts: the town of Troitskosavsk, about two miles north of the Russo-Chinese Frontier; the town of Kiakhta proper, which is on the immediate frontier, but on Russian territory; and separated from the last only by a strip of neutral ground a hundred yards wide is the Chinese town of Maimatchin. Troitskosavsk is the most important of the three, and offers an exceedingly agreeable aspect to the traveller who has been obliged to climb up the reverse side of the steep and barren hill overlooking the town. The houses lining the road are of wood, comfortable, and painted a light colour. Even the lateral streets are well kept, and it is, taking it for all in all, the cleanest town I have seen in all Siberia. One soon realizes that the tea trade supplies the whole population with ample means of earning a livelihood, and also that the wealthy take an interest in their town. On one side of the road, for instance, is the communal school, built out of funds originally intended for the erection of barracks, but, soldiers not being required, the place was

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converted into a school, munificently supported by the merchants of the city. The children pay a small entrance fee. Opposite stands another very large educational establishment, also supported by voluntary contributions.

The dwellings of the principal tea merchants are situated at Troitskosavsk, whose population numbers quite 7,000 souls; but it is at Kiakhta,* on the frontier, that the tea-leaves are manipulated. The two towns are linked by an excellent road, which passes between desolate-looking sand-hills, sparsely covered with wretched fir-trees. The blue outline of the mountains of Mongolia closes in the horizon to the south. The houses of the wealthier inhabitants are painted white, as is the church, the interior of which is extremely rich with massive silver candelabras and a gorgeous iconostase. Beyond a group of *ishbas*, where the workmen dwell, and half hidden by the cupolas of the church, stands the vast but very low one-storied building of the Tea Warehouse. Such is Kiakhta, through which passes annually into the Russian Empire from 40,000,000 to 60,000,000 pounds of tea, costing, before the Custom duties are paid, between £1,500,000 to £2,000,000. The following are the figures obtained from the tea registers during the last five years, kindly supplied to me by the authorities at Kiakhta.

Year.	Weight of Tea.	Value of Tea.
1892	42,596,500 lbs.	£1,672,143
1893	43,123,250 „	1,659,134
1894	51,086,900 „	1,932,318
1895	52,439,500 „	2,043,086
1896	55,369,200 „	2,128,402

The tea begins to pour into Kiakhta in winter from the month of November to February. In December it is not at all an uncommon thing to see as many as 5,000 boxes delivered

* All that part of Siberia situated east of Baikalia forms a sort of neutral ground free of the Custom-house. Only spirits, tobacco, sugar, mineral oils, lucifer matches, and in general all articles of the same character which are subject to excise duty in Siberia proper, pay Custom-house duties when they are sent for sale to the Siberian ports on the Pacific. All other goods have only to pay 'customs' if they are forwarded to parts of the Empire west of Baikalia, and these are paid at Irkutsk, through which everything is obliged to pass. Tea going from Kiakhta pays duty at Irkutsk.

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daily. The total number of boxes of tea which passed the Customs in 1896 was 412,869.

The tea harvest in China takes place generally in spring, the first gathering of the leaves occurring in April, the fourth and the last in June. The latter is compressed into bricks, is of very inferior quality, and bought only by the poorer people. The great tea-market is Hankow on the Yang-tsze. All the great Russian houses have representatives who arrive here annually to purchase, and expedite the tea either by sea, via Odessa, or overland by Kiakhta. We must not, however, imagine that caravan tea, which the Russians consider to be the finest, is all carried overland. Far from it, but then the purchasers are not supposed to know this, as there exists a prejudice to the effect that tea which travels by water is thereby deteriorated, which is nonsense, since all tea must perform a journey by water of greater or less length. Even that which is destined for Kiakhta is sent by boat to Tien-tsin, whence it has to ascend the Pei-ho on junks, and it is only packed on the camels' backs at Kalgan, at the foot of the Great Wall. Thence it has to perform a journey of not less than 900 miles across the desert before it reaches Urga, the sacred town of Mongolia, which is situated at a distance of 160 miles south of Kiakhta. Transport can only take place in the month of October, when the roads begin to get hardened by the first frosts, and the camels have returned from the pasture-lands where they pass the greater part of the summer. These camels are hired from the Mongolians, and there is great competition among the merchants to secure them, the Russians endeavouring to obtain the greater number of beasts before anybody else so as to secure the first crop of tea. A certain quantity of tea is also brought to Kiakhta on little Mongolian carts, which invariably return home carrying with them three pieces of wook, an article which is almost valueless in Siberia, but very dear in China, where it is resold at a profit.

The camels are unloaded at Kiakhta, and the wicker-boxes or baskets, each containing from 100 to 160 pounds of tea, are divested of the light covering of camel's hair which sufficed to protect them during the journey across the Desert of Obi, where rain is almost unknown. For the rest of the journey through Siberia it is necessary to screen them with a waterproof covering made of camel's hide, the hair being turned inwards. Whilst the process of enveloping the boxes is proceeding it is almost

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impossible to bear the intolerable stench. The tea, compressed into bricks, each weighing two pounds and a half, is next sorted, dusted, and those which have been in any degree damaged are separated from the rest and sold at a low price. Then the whole of the tea, be it in leaf or brick, is packed on the sleighs and conveyed, as already stated, across country, partly by water, partly over the routes already described. At Irkutsk, however, the Custom-house officers examine a few of the cases, and stamp the rest with a leaden brand, and the caravan is allowed to proceed to its destination.

The earlier teas which arrive are conveyed by sledge to Irbit, a town on the eastern slopes of the Ural, but beyond the confines of Siberia, and in the Government of Perm. Between February 1st and March 1st Irbit is the scene of an immense fair, which attracts merchants from all parts of Siberia. The principal goods dealt in are Chinese tea, furs from the north and east, and light manufactured articles from Russian Europe. The total sold in the year 1880 amounted to £5,286,000, which has been considerably exceeded since.

The principal tea caravans do not arrive in the region of the Obi before the beginning of April, the sleighs proceeding very slowly, and the stoppages by the way being frequent. Boats convey the fragrant merchandise between Tomsk, Tura, and Tiumen, terminal stations on the Ural Railway, whence they are conveyed to Perm. Here they are shipped up the river Kama, and finally embarked on the Volga and taken to Nijni-Novgorod, the chief centre of the tea trade in Russia. Thence the railways distribute the merchandise over the empire. The results of the tardier crops arrive at Irkutsk, where they are embarked on the Angara and conveyed by boat to the meeting of that river with the Yenissei, where, as it is impossible to ascend the latter, the rudely-constructed boats in which it has hitherto performed the journey are broken up and sold for firewood. By this road only 330 miles are performed by land to Tomsk. Some of the merchants, in order to avoid as much as possible the overland route, take a much longer one by water viâ Uliasutai, a city in Western Mongolia on the Upper Yenissei. The above will suffice to give the reader an idea of some of the exceptional difficulties which the tea merchants have to encounter in conveying their very perishable freight across Northern Asia into Russia, the journey taking not less than a year from the date of the gathering of

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the leaves. The following official data, registered in 1893, of the expense incurred in conveying a single pood, or thirty-six pounds (English), of tea from Han-Keou to Nijni-Novgorod will suffice to afford a fair notion of the great cost of transport.

	£	s.	d.
From Han-Keou to Kiakhta viâ Tien-tsin and Urga	0	15	5
Manipulation at Kiakhta and transport to Irkutsk	0	6	4
From Irkutsk to Nijni (by sledge to Tomsk, water to Tiumen, railway to Perm, and thence by water)	0	12	9
Insurance from Tien-tsin to Nijni, $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.	0	1	10½
Interest on capital	0	3	2
Total	<u>£1</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>6½</u>

On the other hand, the same quantity of tea transported from Hankow to Nijni, viâ the Suez Canal and Odessa, and thence by train to Nijni, costs only thirteen shillings. From these facts it can easily be understood that the great commerce of Kiakhta is purely artificial and abnormal, and exists simply thanks to the enormous difference between the Custom-house duties at Odessa and those at Irkutsk. At the former place the duty is £3 6s. per pood, or thirty-six pounds, for all kinds of tea, whereas at Kiakhta it is only £2 on leaf tea and 5s. 4d. on brick. The insignificance of this latter tax is very important, because brick tea is the only sort which is used in Siberia east of the Volga, the greater part of the leaf tea being forwarded to Russia. On the other hand, notwithstanding its many inconveniences, the tea transport across Russia is a most important factor in Siberian existence, since it furnishes the means of livelihood to thousands of people living along the great postal-road, and indeed is a sort of subvention which the Russian tea-drinkers pay to Siberia, and one which the Government very wisely keeps up by maintaining the high tariff at Odessa. It is interesting to follow the increasing value of a pood (thirty-six pounds) of tea on its way from Irkutsk to Nijni. On entering Siberia at the former place from China it only costs £2 5s. By this time it is already paying the cost of its transport from Hankow, the expenses of insurance, etc., costing about £1 3s., the Custom-house duties amount to about £2, that is, £3 2s. credit, and the transfer thence to Nijni will add about thirteen shillings to its value; so that when we take into account an interest of three shillings on the capital employed we find that a product which cost less than ten

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roubles where it grew and where it was first purchased, by the time it reaches the market costs forty-eight roubles, nearly five times its original value. On the greater part of the leaf tea which passes through Odessa, the Russian pays on every pound of tea at 3s. 2d. he purchases 1s. to the Treasury. The total amount of Custom-house duties paid on tea at Irkutsk amounted in 1896 to £1,050,361.

Independently of tea, the land commerce between the Russian Empire and China is, comparatively speaking, insignificant, and rarely exceeds £265,000. The principal object of import is Russia leather, and the chief article from China is a very light but strong sort of silk, much worn in Siberia during the summer. For the rest, the trade between Siberia and Russia consists mainly in cereals and flour, but it is difficult to obtain exact statistics on account of the many lines of communication which have been recently opened since the introduction of the railway.

CHAPTER VI

SIBERIAN TOWNS

Scarcity of towns and their slight importance—Their administration and commerce—Resemblance to the towns in the Russian provinces—Introduction of telephones and electric light—Intellectual progress—University at Tomsk—The drama at Irkutsk—The crisis through which these towns are passing.

THE absence of large manufactures doubtless accounts in a measure for the fact that Siberia, according to the census of 1897, only contains eleven towns inhabited by over 10,000 souls. Eight of these (including the two cities of Tomsk and Irkutsk, which have each 50,000 inhabitants) are situated on the postal-road which passes from the foot of the Ural to Tiumen, to terminate on the shores of the Pacific at Vladivostok; Omsk is situated somewhat to the south of the old postal-road, at the point where the Trans-Siberian Railway crosses the Irtysh; Tobolsk, the old capital of Siberia, which has greatly declined in our day, is built at the meeting of the Irtysh and the Tobol, and also close to the junction of the two great highroads. Barnaoul, on the Upper Obi, is the only Siberian town of any importance which is not within easy reach of either the railway or the postal-road, but then it has the advantage of being situated in the centre of the most highly cultivated part of the country. There exist, also, a number of other small towns, situated on the two main arteries and in the more fertile valleys. All of them are centres for the distribution of manufactured articles imported from Europe, and also depôts whence the products cultivated in their neighbourhoods are collected and expedited. All these towns are seats both of administration and commerce, and the local capitals are always, with the sole exception of Tobolsk, the biggest

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towns in the district, and contain the dwellings of the officials and other functionaries, which add greatly to their handsome appearance. In the region of the Amur and the Littoral garrisons have been introduced, which lend considerable animation to the place. At Vladivostok in 1895 the Russian population consisted of 2,780 civil servants, 189 exiles, 555 functionaries and priests (including their wives and children), and 10,087 officers and soldiers with their families. At Khabarovsk the official element is still more preponderating. With the exception of Blagoveshchensk, situated at the meeting of the Amur and the Zeya, which owes its prosperity to the neighbouring gold-mines, the towns of Eastern Siberia are nothing more or less than camps or huge villages like Chita or Nertchinsk, with very low *isbas*, or wooden houses, prodigiously broad streets, vast open spaces, the whole dominated generally by the enormous white mass of some official edifice or other.

In the west, however, between the Ural and Lake Baikal, towns exist in the European sense of the word. It cannot be said, however, that they are remarkable for their monumental beauty, but they possess a certain measure of picturesqueness, and bear a striking resemblance to the provincial towns of Russia proper, such as Saratov or Samara, or some quarters of Moscow itself. The houses are nearly all built of black wood like those peppered all over the country, and are built on either side of the long streets at a little distance one from another, and rarely, if ever, embellished by a garden or any attempt at external decoration. The streets cross each other at right angles, and are made as wide as possible, on account of the numerous fires, against which every precaution has to be taken, and people are actually requested not to smoke on the great wooden bridge which crosses the Angara at Irkutsk. In certain wealthier quarters of the towns a story is usually added to the houses, which are painted white, gray, or some other conspicuous colour. Occasionally one comes across a stone building two or three stories high, usually either the shop of some rich merchant or official, or else a museum, hospital, gymnasium, college for boys or school for girls, or sometimes an immense barracks.

The appearance of these dwellings when grouped together on the hill-tops, as at Omsk, is agreeable, especially so as they are interspersed with the bright-coloured cupolas of the churches. As to the latter, they are innumerable. There is literally

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one at every corner. Standing at the centre of the cathedral square at Irkutsk, I was able to see no less than seven at a glance. They are all exactly alike, usually painted blue or rose-colour, surmounted by one big cupola, and surrounded by a lot of smaller ones brightly gilt or silvered, and produce an excellent effect in the sun or on a clear moonlight night. Internally they possess all the barbaric splendour of Russian churches, and are a blaze of gilt icons and crystal chandeliers.

Take them for all in all, Siberian towns are far pleasanter to visit than one might imagine. The streets, as a rule, possess a wooden pavement, but after a heavy rain they are very apt to become impassable. A gentleman at Tomsk once assured me that on one occasion when the snow melted a bullock was drowned in the surging mass of water rolling past his door. But, after all, the streets of Chicago and New Orleans are not very well kept, and where the climatic variations are so extreme, it is doubtless almost an impossibility to keep the streets in anything like proper order. Otherwise, the telephone is to be found in all the more important towns, and when the visitor looks up and sees such an amazing number of wires stretching across the streets from pole to pole, he might readily imagine himself in America. The electric light has also been introduced even at Tomsk and Irkutsk. Means of locomotion have by no means been neglected, and you can hire a quick-going little Russian cabriolet for twenty kopecks, or sixpence the fare! What astonishes one most, however, is that, as in Russia, there is scarcely any movement in the streets of these towns, notwithstanding that they are centres of a very active commerce.

Education has made considerable progress in the towns of Siberia, and the wealthier classes are not behindhand in assisting the Government in this direction. At Tomsk a University has recently been established in an immense and very handsome edifice, which contains at present some 500 students. Admission has been wisely rendered much more easy than it is in Russia, and it is expected that before long a faculty of Law will be established, in which the students will be able to study the new legal reforms which Alexander II. introduced some years ago into the judicial system of Russia. Other professorial chairs will be introduced before long in addition to that of Medicine, which is already very well attended. The library contains over 200,000 volumes, the greater part gifts from private benefactors, and not a few of the

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rarer editions of French and English classics must have originally belonged to libraries dispersed at the time of the French Revolution. A number of comfortable houses have been built in the park attached to the University (only a very short time ago virgin forest) for the benefit of students, who can there receive board and lodging at a very moderate price. In addition to the University, another huge educational establishment, an Institute of Technology, is in progress of construction. Tomsk, although it is somewhat out of the way for commercial purposes, appears to me destined to become before long the intellectual centre of Siberia.

All the Siberian towns possess a theatre. The one at Tomsk was built by a rich merchant some years ago, and during the winter months two permanent troupes give on alternate nights representations of opera and drama. Troupes of Russian actors occasionally visit Siberia, and I remember once seeing two artists, who enjoy great popularity at Moscow, give at Krasnoyarsk a representation in Russian of Shakespeare's 'Taming of the Shrew,' and on the following evening an excellent performance of 'Madame Sans-Gêne.' These plays were attended by large and highly appreciative audiences. At Irkutsk there is a really magnificent theatre capable of accommodating a thousand persons, the erection of which cost not less than £32,000. It was built entirely by public subscription, at the head of the list being the Governor. The prices of admission are—stalls 6s. 8d. in the front row; 2s. 2d. in the back seats; 1s. in the first row of the second gallery, and 6d. in the third. These latter are the cheapest seats in the house. Unfortunately, of late years, the wealthier classes show a distinct tendency, thanks to facilities of travel, to spend their money in Russia, and even in Paris, and the rich merchants are no longer inclined to dazzle the Siberians by a somewhat barbaric display of their wealth. At Moscow and Petersburg, doubtless, they find a greater variety of amusements, and no need, in order to spend their money, to follow the example of a certain Siberian millionaire who used to wash his chamber-floor with champagne. Other times, other manners. If the principals go to St. Petersburg, their representatives remain behind, and although they are unable to make any very ostentatious display, nevertheless, they contrive to live comfortably. The position also of the officials, owing probably to the increased facilities of communication and the spread of education, has

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lost a good deal of its former importance, and governors of provinces, who were in days of yore kings or demigods, are no longer looked upon with any sense of awe, everybody being aware that they receive their daily orders by telegraph from St. Petersburg. Irkutsk, which in former times was the capital, is now only a large provincial city. The grand old Siberian hospitality is disappearing rapidly, and there are not wanting, even in Siberia, old-fashioned people who curse the Trans-Siberian Railway, which is destined sooner or later to revolutionize the manners and customs of Northern Asia.

CHAPTER VII

IMMIGRATION

Causes of Russian emigration to Siberia—Its increasing importance—Absolute necessity for State intervention in the colonization of Asiatic Russia—Roads followed by the emigrants—Land concessions—Provinces towards which they direct themselves—Colonization of the Province of the Amur and the Littoral—Vladivostok—Chinese, Koreans and Japanese—Exiles and convicts—Conditions for the development of Siberia—Favourable and unfavourable elements—Necessity of employing foreign capital.

THE immigrants who arrive in Siberia are almost without exception peasants. According to the census taken last January, there were in Russian Europe, exclusive of Finland and Poland, whose inhabitants rarely, if ever, emigrate, only 94,000,000 inhabitants scattered over a surface of 1,875,000 square miles, that is to say, fifty inhabitants per square mile. One would imagine, therefore, that there was ample space for all the subjects of the Tsar in his European territories; but the great northern Governments of Arkhangelsk, Vologda, and Olonetz, which occupy over a quarter of this area, and in which agriculture is almost impossible, do not contain more than 2,000,000 inhabitants in 540,560 square miles. Then, again, a great number of the Governments situated to the north of Moscow consist of only very inferior marsh-lands, and are but poorly populated, and, what is more, seem unlikely ever to improve. The majority of the inhabitants of the empire are therefore concentrated in the south, where the population is relatively dense, especially in the Governments of Kursk, Penza, Tambof, Orel, Voronej, and notably so in Little Russia, which is all the more remarkable when we consider that these regions are exclusively agricultural, and that the methods of farming are still very primitive. Notwithstanding,

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however, the rapid development of industry in Russia, many years will pass before these regions will be capable of supporting a population equal to that of Central or Western Europe, where the natural conditions are more or less identical. It is not therefore very surprising that a fraction of the population of Russia should go in search of better climes, and direct itself towards Southern Siberia, a more attractive and fertile country than Northern Russia.

Emigration, it must be borne in mind, is but a small item in the natural causes of the increase of the Russian population. The annual excess of births over deaths rises to about 1,500,000 in the whole of the Empire, and is from 1,100,000 to 1,200,000 in European Russia (Poland and Finland always excepted). The emigration towards Asia has up to 1895 scarcely exceeded a tenth of this figure, and does not even now reach more than a fifth or a sixth. According to an official work published at the end of 1896, the 'Statesman's Handbook to Russia,' we find that during 1887-95, 94,000 families, forming an aggregate total of 467,000 persons, established themselves in Siberia. The average therefore would be about 52,000 souls per annum, but the last few years have witnessed a visible increase. The above figures do not apparently include emigrants who are destined for Central Asia (general Government of the Steppes and Turkestan), to which the total rarely exceeds 10,000 per annum. According to information received direct from Siberia, about 63,000 emigrants arrived in 1894 over the Ural from European Russia. On the other hand, 3,495 entered Siberia by sea, landing in the great Littoral Province on the Pacific. Lately the emigration movement has become much more active, and we should not be far out of our reckoning if we estimated the number of emigrants into Siberia for the years 1897 and 1898 as about 200,000 for each year. The number of persons who seek permission to leave Russia for Siberia is becoming greater every year. Many, however, are discouraged and even refused the necessary papers, so as to avoid burdening the newly-settled country with a superfluity of people who generally arrive without a penny in their pockets. It is natural in a country where the peasantry are still so primitive and ignorant as in Russia that the Government should closely watch the movements of emigrants, who might, on finding exaggerated promises and illusions dispelled, become troublesome and even dangerous. The following is

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the manner in which these matters are generally organized in European Russia. When several families belonging to a *volost* express a wish to emigrate they are requested to determine in what part of Siberia they desire to establish themselves. If the applicants are deemed suitable, two of their number, selected as delegates, visit the parcel of land which has been allotted to them, and on returning they are able to inform their friends as to the exact nature of the place to which they are destined. Formerly, the emigrants were allowed to choose their own land, which, as they were almost invariably very inexperienced, was usually quite unsuited to their requirements, and they either went further afield or, disgusted, returned home. In order, therefore, to prevent a recurrence of this unsatisfactory state of affairs, the sensible system of sending on two delegates or pioneers has been established.

The method selected by emigrants entering Siberia was, until quite recently, to ascend the Kama, and take the Ural Railway at Perm for Tiumen; thence, at this terminus, they embarked either on the Tobol, the Irtysh, or the Obi for Tobolsk, which used to be a great rendezvous for the emigrants. In 1893 the Siberian Railway had not reached Omsk, and out of 63,000 emigrants, 56,500 had entered Asia by the Tiumen, and 6,500 only had taken the Trans-Siberian Railway to Kurgan. Among the first, 36,500 followed the water-way which I have just described, and 20,000 performed the journey in carts. To-day the greater number are transported by the railway to the station nearest to the town selected for their future residence, or to the extreme limit of the line, if they are going farther east. There they are obliged to take the *telega*, a sort of Russian cart, shaped like a trough, on four wheels. I have often met on the high-roads in Siberia long lines of these carts, each containing several persons, men, women and children, with their labouring tools and household belongings. The scene is very picturesque, especially towards evening, when the worthy folk encamp on the highroad: the men unsaddling the horses, the women going to the well for water, and the children playing about, whilst some old man, seated on the wayside, reads the Bible out aloud to a group of eager listeners. Sometimes the journey exhausts the resources of the family, and I have seen in Trans-Baikalia a caravan of Little Russians come to a full-stop for want of money, and the good people, encamped on the highway, quietly awaiting the arrival of the district Immigration Agent, to

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obtain from him the supplies necessary to enable them to continue the journey. Emigrants who travel by *telega* from their old home in Europe to the new one in Asia often consume as much as a whole year in the journey from Little Russia to the Amur, albeit the travellers frequently spend as many as three months at a time working on the railway, in order to add a little to their scanty supply of cash.

The majority of the emigrants arrive in spring. In the principal towns on the route refuges have been organized for their shelter. A number of these are to be found at Cheliabinsk at the foot of the Ural. I visited that at Kansk, the centre of a much-frequented region in the Government of Yenissei. Twenty *iourdis*, or enormous huts, built on the model of those used by the Kirghiz and from ten to twelve feet in diameter and nine feet in height, with an extinguisher-shaped roof covered with camel's-hide, were here erected for destitute emigrants. A spacious hospital, kitchens and a Russian bath were at the time nearly completed. A winter habitation with an immense stove had also been erected, but there are not many emigrants travelling during the worst months of the year. All these buildings are of wood, after the fashion of most Russian houses, and seemed fairly comfortable. Three young women from the town acted as voluntary nurses attached to the hospital.

Emigrants who come from the same district in European Russia are as a rule grouped together in the same village, and, as far as possible, everything is done to prevent the crowding together of people who come from divergent provinces, which might give rise to trouble. Thus, the officials always endeavour to avoid mixing the 'Little Russians' with the 'Great Russians,' and never to introduce new-comers into villages already inhabited by old Siberians, who do not look upon emigration in a very favourable light, for the simple reason that formerly they could occupy as much land as they liked and redeem as much of it as they chose, whenever their own fields became exhausted, and they could, moreover, even tramp off in another direction in quest of better land if the spirit moved them so to do. The arrival of a great number of new people has naturally put an end to these irresponsible movements, and consequently given rise to a great deal of discontent.

The following are a few rules which have been adopted recently for the formation of fresh settlements, on the *mir* system of Russian collective communal proprietorship, which

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the Government has decided to introduce into Siberia. Fifteen dessiatines (37 acres) are given gratuitously to each man, and a sum of 30 roubles (about £3 1s. 8d.) can, if necessary, be advanced to each family immediately. Formerly it was necessary to await authorization from the Government at St. Petersburg, even for this small amount, before it could be paid, but, now, happily, it has been decided to leave the matter in the hands of the functionary who is placed at the head of the Immigration Bureau of the district, whereby a great deal of trouble and misery is avoided. Other sums of money can be advanced from time to time up to £9 10s. if the applicant is deemed worthy. Theoretically this money ought to be repaid at the end of ten years, which, needless to say, it rarely, if ever, is.

Of the 63,000 persons who arrived in Siberia from over the Ural in 1894, the majority, 38,000, settled in the Government of Tomsk, 17,000 proceeded to the Amur, 3,800 to the Steppes, 2,100 to the eastern Governments of Yenissei and Irkutsk, and 2,100 to the Government of Tobolsk. These figures do not include the 3,495 who entered the Littoral Province by sea. The region which appears to attract the most emigrants is that of the Upper Obi and its affluents, including the regions of Barnaoul, Biisk, and Kuznetsk in the Government of Tomsk. In these sheltered valleys, which descend from the Altai range, the climate is relatively mild and the land excellent. After this comes the region of the Amur, where the emigrants are almost exclusively Little Russians, who generally established themselves in the region extending along the Lower Zeya to the east of Blagovyeshchensk and the Bureya. The climate, however, is much colder than in the Government of Tomsk, and although the richest part of the Amur has been selected for the principal centre of colonization, the damp is excessive on account of its proximity to the great water and to the very thick forests which cover almost the whole country. The valleys, even on the borders of the Amur and its affluents, are often inundated, and always marshy, and have, moreover, up to the present resisted all attempts at cultivation. The plateaux to the north of the Stanovoi Mountains possess a better kind of soil, and form a more favourable zone, although even here cereals have a tendency to produce, much to their detriment, a superabundance of weeds. The Government, which, for political reasons easily understood,

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has hitherto assisted colonization in the basin of the Amur, has refused until quite lately to extend the movement to the region of the Yenissei, being possibly under the impression that an excessive scattering of the new population ought as much as possible to be avoided. Now that a considerable part of the richer lands of Tomsk is occupied, it has been deemed advisable to make an advance towards the east; therefore, in 1896 19,000 colonists were settled in the Government of the Yenissei, notably in the districts of Minusinsk, on the upper river, which enjoys nearly the same advantages as the Upper Obi, and Kansk more to the east, which is now the most active centre of settlement. The Government of Irkutsk, which apparently contains a lesser supply of likely land, will doubtless attract official attention later on.

Settlers who have been for some considerable time in Siberia appear generally satisfied with their lot, and although they may not endorse the optimistic affirmations of the official world, the majority of their villages appear more prosperous than those they abandoned in Russian Europe. It could hardly be otherwise if they worked hard, since they are allotted abundance of good land and a small pecuniary advance to assist them with preliminary expenses. Nevertheless, a number of them return to Europe every year. In 1894 as many as 4,500 went back, and, I fancy, if the truth were known, a great many more. I once asked an official in charge of the emigrants at Kansk, a very amiable, well-informed man, who takes a great interest in his duties, why so many of these good people wanted to go home again. He replied that not a few peasants emigrated into Siberia under the illusion that they would be much better off, and not have to work so hard, but when they found that they had to labour as hard as ever, they soon got tired, packed up their traps, and returned home. Others complain of the climate, not so much, as we might imagine, of the winter as of the summer, when the mosquitoes are a perfect plague. Some suffer from home-sickness, especially the women, who regret their former surroundings, and who by incessant complaints and lamentations end by worrying their husbands to return. This, however, is not peculiar to Siberia or to the Russians, for it has even been noticed in the United States, where young colonists are often obliged to give up their farms because their wives find an isolated country life insupportable.

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In the greater part of Siberia the population, as we have already observed, is exclusively Russian. The native element may almost be described as non-existent. From the ethnological point of view, the region from the Obi to the Yenissei is already, and tends to become more and more so, a prolongation of European Russia. In the government of the Amur it is, however, otherwise, for the Russians have to face a native population, and the colonists who have come from the European dominions of the Tsar find themselves obliged to compete with a rather formidable Asiatic contingent. On this side the centre of Russian influence is at Vladivostok, a town which was only founded about forty years ago, but which the Trans-Siberian line will eventually lift to extreme importance. The only shadow in the picture is that during three or four winter months the harbour is covered with ice. The noble bay, which the English formerly named after Queen Victoria, and which the Russians have now placed under the patronage of Peter the Great, is one of the most magnificent in the world, in which the whole Russian fleet could easily find shelter; but, unfortunately, although it is in the same latitude as Toulon, it freezes very easily.* For this reason Vladivostok may suffer considerably from the greater attractions of Port Arthur, which is even better placed at the head of the line of communication towards the Celestial Empire, and is, moreover, free from ice the whole year round. Nevertheless, the town will remain the seat of many important military establishments, which are already in existence, and which it would be exceedingly expensive, and by no means easy, to remove elsewhere.

Splendidly situated at the head of a peninsula about twelve miles long, separating two deep bays, whose shores, however, are absolutely sterile, Vladivostok faces the principal and the more eastern of the two ports, which happens, also, to be the safest. The town contains a number of stone houses several stories high, built on the rather steep sides of the hills, and presents quite an imposing appearance, especially after the little wooden-housed towns in the interior of Siberia. Although it lacks the extraordinary animation of its contemporaries, Vancouver, Tacoma, and Seattle, for instance, on the other side of the Pacific, its streets are the liveliest I have seen between Moscow and Nagasaki. It soon becomes evident

* By means of an ice-breaking steamer vessels are now able to leave or enter Vladivostok harbour at any time.

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that one is in the Far East here. The streets are crowded with pigtailed Chinese in blue, with Koreans in white, and Japanese in their national costumes. Among these Asiatics move soldiers and sailors, so that the European civilian costume is scarcely represented at all, and the majority of those who do wear it are Japanese. The day after my arrival happened to be the feast of St. Alexander Nevsky, one of the great Russian holidays, which coincided with a Chinese festival, so that the whole place was a blaze of Celestial bunting, gold-edged yellow triangular shaped flags, emblazoned with heraldic dragons, far out-numbering those of the Russians. Figures confirm the impressions of experience, and the following show the manner in which the population of Vladivostok was subdivided in 1895 :

	Men.	Women.	Total.
Nobles	290	228	518
Priests and their families ...	19	18	37
Russian civil population ...	1,691	1,089	2,780
Soldiers and families ...	9,232	855	10,087
Exiles and families ...	117	72	189
Other Europeans ...	46	26	72
Japanese	676	556	1,232
Chinese	5,580	58	5,638
Koreans	642	177	819
Total	18,293	3,079	21,372

In 1895 the population had considerably increased, mainly in consequence of the barracks and of the increase of Russian and Asiatic emigration. It has been observed that since the Chino-Japanese War the Koreans have developed a distinct tendency to establish themselves on Russian soil.

As in California and Australia, the Chinese who arrive in Vladivostok do so without bringing their wives. They are mainly engaged as workmen, domestic servants, boatmen, etc. When they have amassed a small fortune they return home. Many of them, indeed, pass the winter in Shan-tung, in the neighbourhood of Chi-fu, of which latter place they are nearly all natives. The Japanese are, likewise, engaged in petty trade, and a considerable number of them are hairdressers. It is also whispered abroad, and pretty freely, too, that not a few of them are spies. A high code of morals would condemn the manner in which the majority of the Japanese here gain their liveli-

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hood. As to the Koreans, being very strong, they are better adapted for hard work, and have supplied a number of hands on the railway. They are more numerous in the environs of Vladivostok than in the town itself—and they are highly appreciated by their employers, the administration affording them small allotments on account of their industrious and peaceful habits.

It is not only at Vladivostok that the influence of the Far East appears, but throughout the entire government of the Amur. From the moment one enters Trans-Baikalia one is brought into immediate contact with the Mongol tribe of the Buriats. As already stated elsewhere, the Yellow Race predominates in this region, and throughout Trans-Baikalia the followers of Buddhism form about a third of the population—in 1895, 190,003 out of 610,604. Advancing towards the East, and leaving aside the older Russian possessions in order to enter the provinces annexed in 1857, we find that the territory of the Amur contains 21,000 Manchu Buddhists out of a population of 112,000 according to the census of 1897. These Manchus were about the only occupants of the country at the time of its annexation, and not a few have remained subjects of the Chinese Empire. Opposite to Blagovyeshchensk there is a large Chinese village, whence almost every morning a number of people bring fruit and vegetables to the Russian town.

In the territory of the Littoral, in that broad zone which extends from 42° to 70° north, it was estimated in 1895 that the Russians exceeded 110,000 in a population of 152,000, the rest being composed of 23,000 natives, 18,000 Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, and about 1,000 Jews. According to the census taken in 1897, the population has very considerably increased. It records 214,940 inhabitants, but these have not been subdivided into classes, and, moreover, the European immigration has not been very considerable in the last two years. A curious observation has been made as to the preponderance of the male sex over the female, there being 147,669 men as against 67,261 women. The reason for this is not far to seek, and is mainly due to the fact that the Russian immigrants generally arrive with their families, whereas the military element, exceeding 40,000 in the Littoral Province, and the Chinese are not encumbered with women-folk. Khabarovsk, essentially a garrison town, and the capital of the

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government, has out of a population of 14,932 only 3,259 women. Its appearance is, therefore, quite martial, and its picturesqueness is considerably improved by the presence of a number of Chinese junks in the harbour, that, as is the case at Blagovyeshchensk, Sydney and Melbourne, bring excellent vegetables from the fertile kingdom of the Son of Heaven. Apart from the troops, the Koreans, the Chinese and the Japanese form at least a quarter of the population of the Littoral, and, combined with the natives, reach a total which is only slightly overtopped by the Russians. There are not wanting those who disapprove of this high proportion of the Yellow Race in the three territories forming the Government of the Amur, but without any justifiable reason. The Buriats, for instance, are by no means a decreasing element in the population, and the Russians are distinctly prolific, whereas the Chinese immigration, if it ever takes place on any considerable scale, will have to cross the Desert of Gobi, an obstacle which will delay it for a long time to come. In the other two territories, the indigenous population, mostly fishermen and hunters of a very primitive sort, is undoubtedly visibly diminishing, excepting in the ice-bound regions of the Okhotsk and Behring Straits, whither, too, Manchus, Chinese and Koreans are flocking in considerable numbers. All these Asiatics are hardworking, live upon less than the Russians, and are much more industrious and often hire from the European immigrants strips of land which they cultivate with much better results. The small trade of the towns is almost entirely in the hands of the Yellow Race. Although the Chinese immigration is more or less of an ephemeral nature, it is very likely to become exceedingly numerous, especially in the towns and their suburbs, and might in the course of time render the competition of the Whites extremely difficult, and necessitate interference on the part of the Russian Government to limit the sphere of Chinese labour. In any case, it is quite certain that if Manchuria, as a consequence of the introduction of the railway, ever comes under the dominion of the Tsar, it is highly improbable that its so doing will increase the immigration of the Russians, mainly on account of the surprising activity of the Chinese in colonizing this part of their empire. At the present time the Government is more preoccupied with the European than with the Asiatic immigration, and, whereas it never refuses a grant

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of land to the Koreans, it very frequently does so to the Europeans, excepting by special and exceptional favour. I am obliged to admit that the Government has, as a rule, been very indulgent towards the French, several of whom have obtained grants at Blagovyeshchensk, although a refusal was given to a Frenchman to buy land notwithstanding that he had lived in the country for over thirty years. As to the gold mines, their exploitation is only granted to Russian subjects. The whole country east of Baikalia, that is to say, the Government of the Amur, is at present freed from paying Customs duties, excepting on spirits, tobacco, sugar and other articles which in Russia pay excise duty. This part of Siberia is never likely to become attractive to Europeans of other nationality than the Russians. On the other hand, undoubtedly, in the course of time, European capital will be much employed in this part, and some enterprising merchants and engineers may even eventually establish themselves in the country, which will surely prove to its interest, and not to its detriment.

Independently of voluntary immigrants, Siberia used to receive annually a great number of political and other exiles and convicts. By a *ukaz*, issued in 1899, Tsar Nicholas II. put a stop to the old and cruel system of exiling suspects and convicts into Siberia,* which ought undoubtedly to result in much good; for when a country begins to be thickly peopled with free immigrants it is unwise to continue to use it as a penal settlement. These exiles may be divided into two principal groups: firstly, political, often very honest and amiable people, such as students who have taken part in a manifestation hostile to the Government; Poles, compromised in recent insurrections; Catholics and Protestants who have displayed too much zeal in the affirmation of their religious opinions; and Raskolniks, whose peculiar theological opinions have already been described. The second category includes less estimable people: youths of good family of by no means irreproachable character, who have been sent to meditate on their shortcomings for a certain number of years, and repent of their follies at their leisure on the pleasant banks of the Obi or the Yenissei; and certain functionaries of good family who have been guilty of appropriating money officially entrusted to them. Of these un-

* The Tsar appointed a Commission to inquire into the whole question of transportation to Siberia, with a view to its cessation. The Commission is now understood to have reported in this sense.—H. N.

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fortunate people, those who have been guilty of minor offences are sent to Western Siberia, where they often obtain employment as servants and coachmen. On the other hand, those who have committed graver offences, and who have been condemned to hard labour, undergo their punishment in Eastern Siberia, in Irkutsk, Yenissei, or in Trans-Baikalia, and must remain there. Inveterate criminals, murderers, and escaped galley-slaves, are sent to the island of Sakhalin, opposite the mouth of the Amur, where, even at the expiration of their terms, they are obliged to end their lives. Those political exiles who are not punished for grave offences are also relegated to the west, where the climate is fairly temperate. The graver the charge and the heavier the sentence, the farther are they sent eastward, even to the icy territories of Yakutsk, Verkhoyansk, Nijne Kolymsk, and Ust-Yansk. To these regions are also relegated the members of the strange sect of Eunuchs. The majority of these people, unless indeed they are very gravely compromised, after being obliged to reside three, or even ten, years in a village, are allowed to settle in a town, to go freely all over Siberia, and even at the expiration of a certain number of years to return to Russia. They not infrequently make themselves extremely useful. Many Poles become inn-keepers, and I know of one at least who is a Doctor of Law, and who speaks excellent French. At Irkutsk one can get good beer, a beverage elsewhere execrable, a boon entirely due to the enterprise of an exile from the Baltic provinces. In the extreme north not a few exiles employ their time with scientific and meteorological studies. Here I may observe that I have never seen any of the exiles in Siberia ill-treated, and even the chain which some of them are obliged to wear did not seem to me very heavy. The great prison of Alexandrofsk, near Irkutsk, is admirably managed, its rules being very mild. Nevertheless, I must confess that I only visited what the officials chose to show me. All I can say is that, according to my experience, if there are exiles who are habitually badly treated, they must be very few in number. Of course, I can say nothing in extenuation of the system of transporting a young man or even a young woman to languish in a dreary village buried in the depths of a forest or the Tundra, merely because they happen to have taken an over-prominent part in some political or students' demonstration.

One curious fact connected with this system of Russian

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transportation is that the wives and children of the exiles are often authorized to follow the condemned man, which they very frequently do, although in some cases the law considers the marriage bond annulled by the mere act of condemnation, the unfortunate exiles being considered civilly dead. The families of these poor people often endure such terrible privations that local committees have been founded, under the patronage of the authorities, to assist them. In 1894, in the five Governments of Tobolsk, Tomsk, Yenissei, Irkutsk, and Yakutsk, 15,000 exiles and their families arrived.

In a single and not particularly favourable year, the population of Siberia was increased by about 85,000 persons, of whom about 66,495 were free immigrants. The natural increase was almost equally great, rising, according to the statistics, to 78,000, exclusive of the Littoral Province, which, if taken into account, ought to raise the population by 80,000. On a population which we may estimate at 5,300,000 at this period, there must have been about 250,000 births, that is 47·5 per 1,000, and 172,000 deaths, or 32·4 per 1,000. The birth-rate, therefore, is exceedingly high, and the death-rate, when the conditions of the country are considered, certainly not abnormal. In 1898 the immigration, owing to the opening of the railway, was greatly increased, to the extent even of 200,000 souls. It is not therefore a lack of population which is ever likely to affect the future of Siberia. The natural resources of the country can be justly compared with Canada, which it exceeds in size, and also, to a slight extent, in population ; but the difference between the two countries, in point of economic development, is very great. What is wanted in Siberia is less the creation of a great number of complex industries, for which the country is not yet ripe, than the introduction, as already stated elsewhere, of up-to-date methods of exploiting the natural resources of the country, which can only be borrowed from foreign countries, and it will only be by opening wide its doors and by receiving strangers without jealousy or unwarranted suspicion that Russia will ever be able to obtain from her gigantic enterprise in Trans-Siberia a return worthy of the great wealth of a country which must eventually be placed on the same footing as any other in point of civilization and progress.

CHAPTER VIII

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION IN SIBERIA

Absolute insufficiency of the present means of transport—Coaches and sleighs—The tarantass: price, length and conditions of travelling by this means of locomotion—Navigation—Scheme for penetrating into Siberia by the Arctic Ocean and its recent success—Absolute necessity of more railways.

IN order to form a fair idea of the revolution which the Trans-Siberian Railway is likely to bring about in the economical and political conditions of Northern Asia, it will be as well to glance at the actual conditions of the present means of travel and transport in the country. The most rapid means of locomotion at the disposal of travellers only yesterday, as it were, was in summer the stage-coach, and in winter the sleigh. Twenty years ago, to go to Vladivostok (6,000 miles distant) the traveller took the coach at Kazan, on the Volga, the journey occupying not less than two months in the more favourable season, when a coat of snow, as solid as marble and as smooth as velvet, replaces the usual mud and slush on the Siberian roads. Later on, with the progress of navigation and the construction of a railway across the Urals, the starting-point for this journey was removed further on to the most eastern point touched by the steamboats, in the basin of the Obi at Tomsk. In summer this route shortened the journey *viâ* Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk, and Chita about 1,875 miles, at the end of which one reached the Amur, where navigation recommenced. Since 1896 the Trans-Siberian has passed Tomsk, and now the starting-point of the road journey has gone gradually farther afield, and is now daily receding more to the east.

In the summer of 1897 the railway had already reached the little town of Kansk, about 160 miles beyond the Yenissei, and it was here, or at the Kluchi station, some 65 miles further on,

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that one hired a coach. It is, however, wiser to buy one's tarantass, in order to avoid the trouble of unloading luggage at each stage, and, again, the coaches hired out by the postmasters are much less comfortable.

The station-master at Kluchi, to whom I had been recommended, like many other subordinate officials in Siberia, was an exile, who in better days had been a captain in the artillery, and, moreover, the cashier of his regiment. One fine day, in a fit of over-generosity, he unluckily lent a sum of money, abstracted from the cash-box, to a comrade who had lost very considerably at the gaming-tables. Fate avenged the regiment in the shape of an inspector, who inopportunately arrived upon the scene, examined into affairs, and forthwith ended the military career of the unlucky officer. After fourteen years' exile in Siberia this indiscriminately good-natured individual has become chief inspector of a little railway-station, and adds to his small income by letting out tarantasses to travellers. He sold me for £18 the best of his vehicles, which, I was assured, had recently been used by a distinguished official, but, nevertheless, I had to get rid of it, when I took the steamer on the Amur two months later, for about £7.

Jules Verne, in 'Michael Strogoff,' has introduced and popularized the tarantass. It is a vehicle without springs, with a body about six feet long, like a trough supported on three broad planks of wood, and mounted upon two very low axles nine to ten feet apart. An immense hood protects the back part of the carriage from the rain, and by buttoning the leathern apron fixed to the front, one can keep one's self almost hermetically screened from the weather. The tarantass, if it is not particularly comfortable, has the advantage of being very strong. It possesses nothing in the shape of a seat, and one is obliged to lie full-length on a litter of hay or upon the luggage, unless, indeed, from time to time, in order to change position, one cares to sit on the edge of the vehicle or else alongside the coachman. The horses are supplied by the postmasters at the rate of three copecks, or three farthings, per verst for each horse, and, moreover, one has to pay a fixed tax of about fivepence per horse at each relay. The team consists usually of three horses, and the relays are found at a distance of about sixteen miles apart. The expenses, therefore, for this short distance amount to about five shillings, inclusive of a tip to the coachman, so that there

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is not much to complain of in that respect. The same tariff applies in winter, but in the intermediary seasons, from March 5 to May 15, and from September 15 to December 1, when the thaw sets in and the roads are very heavy, a fourth horse is needed, and the expense is increased about one quarter. I used frequently to ask Siberians how many miles could be performed in this sort of vehicle. Of course, almost everybody gave me a different answer. One high official in Tomsk informed me that it could undertake as many as 400 versts in twenty-four hours. 'Do not imagine you can go more than from sixty-five to eighty,' said the station-master, and as it was he who had sold me my tarantass, I came to the conclusion that his rather dismal prognostic was the true one. As a matter of fact, everything depends upon the condition of the roads, and also as to whether the traveller has supplied himself with a *podorojne*, an official document usually granted to Imperial couriers and to high officials, and which enables its possessor to avoid being detained at the various stations on the road. Fortunately, as I had one of these documents, I was able to make between 90 and 120 miles in twenty-four hours.

I cannot describe the scenery by the way as particularly interesting. The road cuts through the forests of pines and larches, and is, as a rule, fairly well kept, and about as broad as the best of our national routes in France. From time to time the wall of verdure opens out to give way to a clearing, along which one perceives rows of wooden houses, indicating the existence of some village or other, the name of which is printed on a post, that also supplies information as to the number of inhabitants of each sex. One soon gets tired of the beauty of the trees, and, to be truthful, also of the rather monotonous convoys of *telegas* loaded with merchandise, waggons with gold, escorted by soldiers, and of the interminable caravans of emigrants. As one passes the Baikal the road becomes less and less frequented, and more and more monotonous and dreary, especially in the dismal steppe, with its stunted growth, through which flows the Vitim, an affluent of the Lena. The road now meanders through marshy prairies, and is merely indicated by the line of gray telegraph-posts stretching off towards the horizon.

In order to break the intolerable monotony of these very long journeys, it is usual to invite one or two other travellers

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to share expenses, and these are not difficult to find, for the Russians are naturally sociable and quite free from stiffness or conventionality. I was rather surprised on one occasion to find the wife of an official in Trans-Baikalia who, to join her husband, had performed the journey from Vladikavkaz, 4,000 miles by rail and 1,000 miles by road, in the company of an officer with whom she was only slightly acquainted. The Russians were not more astonished at this than Americans would have been. The general insecurity of the country is probably responsible for the ease with which people make acquaintances. Those who like to deal in horrors are by no means behindhand in relating appalling stories of travellers who have been waylaid by escaped convicts and murdered in the heart of the forest. 'Have you your revolvers?' asked the postmaster, on the evening of my first journey in my tarantass, and just as we were about to start. 'Three travellers were assassinated on this relay only fifteen days ago,' continued he, and then he gave us a horribly detailed account of the circumstances. I had no revolver with me, and never had any reason to need one, and I rather doubted the authenticity of these gruesome stories. The real danger which travellers in Siberia have to encounter is that of having the rope which attaches their luggage to the back of the tarantass artfully cut and their portmanteaus carried off. Accidents are rare, as the tarantass is generally very strongly built. It is somewhat alarming, however, when at the head of a steep incline, to watch the coachman exciting his horses into a gallop by the wildest gesticulations, but one soon learns that the danger in this case is merely apparent.

Considerable patience is certainly needed on these Siberian journeys, for the roads are often appallingly bad, especially when the inundations set in after a thaw, when even the bridges are carried off by the torrents. Then, again, what is particularly exasperating is the passive air of resignation assumed by all concerned, postmaster and coachman, and even by one's travelling companions. Accustomed as these people are to live in a climate in which the forces of Nature defy the ingenuity of man, they are very apt, especially as they have nothing on earth else to do, to shrug their shoulders at the inevitable, and to avoid with supreme skill troubling themselves about the ways and means of bettering things. I remember on one occasion, after having been assured at

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Kiakhta and Chita that if I persisted in continuing my journey I was exposing my life, being landed in a ford into which one of the wheels of the tarantass stuck. To extricate it, we had to work for over an hour in the cold water and in the dim dawn, and even then we were only able to do so with the help of two Buriats who were passing that way, and who lent us their horses to assist us in getting out of this unpleasant fix. With the sole exception of this mishap I had very little to complain of. It is in the post-stations, however, that one's patience is put to the test and that one realizes the force of a truism made by a certain English author, who began a book on Siberia with the following singular aphorism: 'In Siberia time is not money.' One crosses the threshold of these rather doleful-looking houses, which become more and more lugubrious as one advances eastward, with a feeling akin to dread.

The postmaster is almost invariably to be found seated in front of a very dirty register, and generally grunts out his answers to your inquiries as to whether he has any horses ready, 'You will have to wait two or three hours, possibly until the next morning,' after which pleasant piece of information you pass into the common waiting-room, usually furnished with a few chairs, two or three tables and one or two old sofas. On the wall hang an ikon or so, the inevitable portraits of their Majesties, and a few frames with the usual printed instructions and regulations. Then comes a sort of glorified bill-of-fare, from a perusal of which you learn the names of a number of succulent dishes, but, unfortunately, the last line informs you that the postmaster is only obliged to supply you with black bread and hot water, the last article being intended to make tea, with which, together with sugar, every traveller supplies himself before starting. Nearly always, however, one finds excellent eggs and milk. It is wise in travelling in Trans-Baikalia to take a supply of preserves, which you can procure in any large Siberian town.

The travellers, however, whom one meets in these resorts are generally exceedingly friendly, very willing and even eager to share their provisions. Seated round the great copper samovar, conversation becomes cordial and intimate, everybody calling each other, regardless of age or sex, by their Christian names, 'Nicholas Petrovitch,' 'Paul Ivanovitch,' 'Elisabeth Alexandrovna,' and so forth. Constantly, when on the journey, one often falls in with the same people, and thus acquaint-

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ance soon ripens into intimacy. But, although these gatherings round the samovar are very agreeable, and enable one to study the pleasanter qualities of the Russian people, it is not advisable to pass the night in any of the hostelries along the road, for all the insecticide powders ever invented will not insure a quiet night.

However interesting, therefore, a cross-country journey through Siberia may be, it is not exactly of the kind one would recommend for a pleasure trip, although many Russian ladies, even of the highest rank, frequently undertake it, but I do not recommend it to delicate people. When supplied with a *podorojne* and the weather is fine the journey is pleasant enough, but it must not be forgotten that it takes seven weeks to go from the Ural to Vladivostok. In winter the journey by sleigh from the Volga takes two months, but if it takes so long for a traveller, what must it be for merchandise! Commerce, therefore, on account of the backward condition of the land-routes, is obliged in Siberia to make use of the splendid water-courses, but even these are paralyzed during seven months of the year by thick coatings of ice, and, what is still worse, they all flow towards an ocean eternally blocked by icebergs.

Recently some very hardy experiments, crowned so far with partial success, have been made to penetrate to the heart of Siberia by the Polar Sea when navigation is free during certain weeks of the year. It will be remembered that it was by the White Sea that European commerce, represented by an Englishman named Chancellor, first entered Russia in the sixteenth century. It is therefore not to be wondered at that attempts have been made to penetrate into Siberia by the mouths of the Obi and the Yenissei, which are situated at no greater distance than 1,000 to 1,200 miles from the northernmost part of Norway, where the sea is always free from ice. M. Sidorov, a Russian gentleman of ample fortune, in the middle of the present century, devoted himself to carrying out this scheme, and notwithstanding that he was discouraged by the leading scientists of the day, who considered it impracticable, he promised a very ample reward to the captain of the first ship which should enter the Yenissei. Two expeditions, attempted in 1862 and 1869, failed; but in 1874 an Englishman named Wiggins, captain of the *Diana*, succeeded in passing the Straits of Kara, which separate Novaya Zemlya from the continent, on the frontiers of Europe and

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Asia, and thus was able to effect a passage into the estuary of the Yenissei. More successful attempts were made in the following years, and in 1878 iron, groceries, machinery, and other articles, were landed at the mouths of the Obi and the Yenissei. In 1887 an English company was formed to carry on a regular service at the close of each summer between England and the North of Siberia, but unfortunately the first year was not successful, the goods not being of a profitable character. On the succeeding voyage the vessel could not pass the Straits of Kara, and had to return home. Subsequently a new company was formed, but with disastrous results. These ineffectual attempts, however, did not discourage the English, and the scheme for navigating the Arctic Ocean was reassumed on a larger basis in 1896, when three steamers entered the Yenissei and ascended that river to Turukhansk, about 600 miles from its estuary, where their goods were transferred to large barges and conveyed to Krasnoyarsk. The merchandise, which included seven steam-engines, was sold for a fair profit. This English company has now installed an agency at Krasnoyarsk, and the Russian Government, in consideration of the great services which it has rendered at great risk in attempting to create a regular service through the Arctic Ocean into Western and Central Siberia, has reduced the customs duties on all goods introduced by it by one half, and indeed has completely abandoned its claims on a number of articles such as grocery and machinery. Moreover, so pleased has the Russian Government been by this courageous attempt that it has granted some very valuable mining concessions on this river. In 1897 six English steamers returned to Turukhansk, and quite a fleet of them was directed to the mouth of the Obi, hitherto somewhat neglected on account of the shallowness of the water. Moreover, an attempt has recently been made to create an export trade between Siberia and England, and a cargo of corn brought by the company's barges to the point where their ships are anchored was soon afterwards happily transported to Europe. In 1898 the same company met with identical success. Thus far this enterprise has been very fortunate. Needless to say, the Kara Sea and the straits which border upon it are, up to the beginning of August, blocked with ice, concentrated there by the different currents, and the season during which navigation is possible lasts only from six weeks to two months, between August and September. The

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ships used in this particular service must leave Europe a little beforehand, so as to await at the Straits of Kara a favourable opportunity to penetrate to the mouth of the rivers, ascend them, discharge and recharge, and start again as quickly as possible. The time is exceedingly limited during which the barges can transport their cargoes into the interior and reascend the Siberian rivers ere these are frozen over, and this especially is the case on the Yenissei, whose currents, even at Krasnoyarsk, are not more than six miles an hour, attaining, however, twelve miles between Krasnoyarsk and Yenissei. Therefore it is impossible to perform more than seventy to eighty miles a day, and it must be remembered that between Turukhansk and Krasnoyarsk the distance is about 1,000 miles, and that in the beginning of October navigation is suspended. Under these conditions it is not likely that more than one service a year can ever be organized, although possibly, when the peculiarities of the icy regions of the Kara Sea are better known, it might be otherwise. It should also be mentioned that the vessels engaged in this particular trade have not been built expressly for it, but are ordinary cargo-boats, which can be engaged during the rest of the year trading in pleasanter climes. If the present company establishes itself definitely it will be extremely fortunate, not only for the town of Krasnoyarsk, but for the whole of Siberia, which will thus be able to export, by a very cheap route, the excess of its harvests and perhaps also some of its superb wood, and receive in exchange from Western Europe manufactured articles and machinery, hitherto exclusively supplied from Moscow. Therefore the opening of the Trans-Siberian Railway, combined with the passage of navigation through the Arctic Sea, will necessarily benefit Asiatic Russia very considerably, and help that country to obtain freer communication with the rest of the world, and thereby enable it eventually to become completely modernized.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

Origin of the Trans-Siberian Railway—At first considered only from the strategic and political point of view—Completion of the Ural Railway—Project of utilizing the navigable routes to unite Russia to the Amur—Difficulties encountered owing to the severity of the climate—Alexander III. in 1891 decides to lay a line between the Ural and the Pacific, and determines the conditions of its construction—The various sections of the line and its deviations across Manchuria—Condition of the works in 1892, and the speed with which it has been constructed—Russia now possesses (1900) a line of mixed communication by train and boat passing from the Ural to the Pacific, and in 1904 a complete line will pass directly from the Ural to Port Arthur, a distance of over 4,130 miles—The monster ferry-boats in course of construction to convey passengers across Lake Baikal—The success of the enterprise.

THE idea of making an overland road from Russia to the Far East and the Pacific probably germinated in the fertile brain of Voltaire, who, in a letter to Count Schuvarof, dated Ferney, June 11, 1761, said 'that it ought to be possible to travel from Russia direct to China without having to cross any considerable mountain-pass, just as one can go from St. Petersburg to Paris without leaving the plain.' The matter was even more practically defined, nearer our own time, by Count Mouravief-Amurski, who, after he had annexed the province of the Amur to Russia, favoured the idea of building a Trans-Siberian railway, and, in the meantime, encouraged the creation of a postal high-road from the Urals to the Amur, which, he considered, would greatly strengthen Russian prestige on the shores of the Pacific.

The Trans-Siberian Railway, it may be remarked, was not originally designed merely in the interests of Siberia, but as a means of uniting Europe with the rich countries of the Far

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East, in such a manner as to avoid the necessity of passing any length of time in the rude and sparsely-peopled intermediary territories. Even after the project was definitely accepted by Alexander III., the political and strategical considerations of the problem were deemed of far greater importance than the commercial; but presently it transpired that Siberia was not quite the forlorn country hitherto imagined, but that it possessed certain resources of great value, which might easily be developed, provided rapid communication with the rest of the empire was organized.

The first step in the right direction was the construction of the Ural Railway, opened in 1880, which united Perm on the Kama with Tiumen on the Tobol, a river flowing into the Irtysh. The increasing necessity of developing the important gold and iron mines in the Urals was doubtless the principal motive why this line was completed; but presently it proved to be of vast importance to the rest of Siberia, since, by combining the river with the land routes, it became possible, at least during five or six months of the year, to reach Tomsk in a relatively short period.

At that time it was thought the opening of this trunk line would be detrimental to the scheme of a complete Trans-Siberian railway, for once the junction of the navigable tributaries of the Obi with those of the Volga was accomplished, it was deemed desirable to connect Russia with its possessions in the Far East by uniting in the same manner the basin of the Obi with that of the Yenissei, and finally the latter with the affluents of the Amur, and so with the Pacific. A railway from the Obi to the Yenissei was not thought necessary, a canal being all that was required. In 1882, therefore, the construction of a canal was undertaken between the Ket, a tributary of the Obi, and the Kass, an affluent of the Yenissei, the distance not being more than 126 miles. The canal in question, which traverses a series of virgin forests, when completed, unfortunately, however, did not realize expectation. To the east of the Yenissei its promoters encountered formidable obstacles from the ice and from the numerous rapids that disturb the current of the Angara, and all attempts to ascend that river have hitherto failed.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the enterprising engineers hoped to the last to be able to modify some of them, but have not succeeded in so doing. Thus, it soon became evident

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that if any practical means of communication was to exist between Russia and the Pacific, it could only be by some method independent of climatic irregularity. The late Tsar, Alexander III., very readily understood that the mixed rail and river system, with its many inconveniences of loading and unloading, and its ice blockades, was, comparatively speaking, useless. Hence the great encouragement and assistance which his Imperial Majesty gave to the creation of the Trans-Siberian Railway, in which he took the deepest interest, being quite of opinion that its completion was of vital importance to the improvement and well-being of an immense section of his Empire. In less than eight years from the day he signed the Imperial decree authorizing its immediate execution trains began to run over 3,300 miles, uniting the upper region of the Amur with Europe and the lower section of that river with the Pacific. Without entering into further particulars of the various routes proposed and subsequently given up, suffice it to say that at present the excellent idea of creating a line running along the shores of Lake Baikal from Irkutsk to Misofsk has been temporarily abandoned, and that a short line of forty-four miles between Irkutsk and Listvenitchnaya now runs to the western shores of that lake, where the trains will ere long be shunted directly on board ferry-boats built on the well-known American system, and thus travellers will be able to continue their journey to the Far East without leaving the train.

The Trans-Siberian Railway between Cheliabinsk and Vladivostok now includes a main line some 4,125 miles in length, plus two branch lines, one 104 miles and the other 410 miles in length, which unite with the Upper and Lower Amur.

The Western Siberian Railway was finished in 1895; the Central Siberian and the section between Irkutsk and Baikal in 1898. Trains can now run over 2,152 miles of rail. The 478 miles of the Ussuri line, of which 67 miles belong to the trunk line, were not opened until 1897. The many difficulties of the Trans-Baikalian line, which somewhat retarded its completion, having been overcome, it was inaugurated quite recently, whereby 2,814 miles out of the total 4,125 miles were rendered free for traffic. The line to Ussuri was finished three years ago, and the rail having been laid between Onon and Stretensk, the Russians have now (1900) a complete land and river system of intercommunication to the Pacific.

For some years past a number of Russian officers and engineers

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have been quietly exploring Manchuria, with very interesting results. In 1895 the Chinese Government, after the Chino-Japanese War, accorded, as a token of gratitude to Russia for her share in the combined intervention with France and Germany in her favour, the privilege to build a railway through this important province, and, moreover, to occupy the country during its construction, the better to protect both works and workmen. This circumstance brought about a great modification in the original route of the Trans-Siberian line. The section in the Amur from Stretensk to Khabarovsk was abandoned and replaced by a Trans-Manchurian Railway which leaves the station at Onon, 104 miles east of Stretensk, to rejoin the original line at Nikolsk, about 67 miles from Vladivostok, and thus has a mixed route of rail and river been created which brings Europe and the Pacific into direct communication during the summer months. The train now conveys travellers from the Ural to Stretensk; thence by boat to Khabarovsk, whence the line continues uninterruptedly to Vladivostok. As to the great Manchurian line, it cannot be completed, even according to the letter of the concession, before 1904, so numerous and so very great are the natural and other obstacles which have to be overcome. A notable modification has, however, already been made in the original plan. Vladivostok is now no longer to be the main terminus, which will be transferred to Port Arthur, 530 miles further south. The advantages to commerce to be derived from this project will doubtless soon and amply compensate for the extra labour and expense.

The great difficulties of constructing the Trans-Siberian Railway were mainly due to its abnormal length. Whereas the Americans had only 2,000 miles to cut in creating their line between the Mississippi and the Pacific, the Russians thirty years later had to lay down more than 4,000 miles of rail in order to reach the same ocean from the Ural. Otherwise their difficulties were very much less formidable than those which at times nearly baffled even the ingenuity of the Americans. Happily there are no Rocky Mountains or Sierra Nevada in Siberia to traverse at a great height, but only comparatively low ranges like the Yablonovoi, or 'Apple-Tree Mountains,' so called from their rather dumpy shapes. Then, again, although Siberia is at present not more densely inhabited than was the Far West from 1860 to 1870, it contains no such

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desolate regions as the plateaus of Utah and Nevada. It may, therefore, be safely affirmed that from the engineering point of view the task was a comparatively easy one, although the line has to pass over an exceedingly varied country after leaving the Ural, and through interminable plains, to reach the undulating regions between the Obi and the Yenissei, where it ascends a chain of hills at an altitude of not less than 2,000 feet on the road from the Yenissei to Irkutsk. On the eastern shore of the Baikal the railway gradually ascends to an altitude of not less than 3,500 feet above the level of the water, whence it descends in rapid zig-zag into the valleys of the Ingoda and the Chilka, cuts the abrupt spurs of some very high mountains, and passes into marsh-lands where, by the way, the engineers have had to overcome their greatest obstruction, mainly due to the unstable condition of the soil. When, therefore, we take into consideration that between the Amur and the Ural there is not a single tunnel, we may safely conclude that, if it were not for its enormous length, this now famous line has not been from the engineering point of view as arduous an undertaking even as have been, for instance, some of the much shorter lines nearer home, across the Alps and the Cevennes.

The bridges, on the other hand, are very remarkable and numerous, and some of them required great skill in their construction, since they span the more important rivers of Siberia, which, with the exception of those in the basin of the Amur, invariably flow due north. There are four principal bridges, of which two cross the Irtysh and the Obi respectively, each 2,750 feet in length; the other two span the Yenissei and the Selenga, and are about 3,000 feet in length. These four bridges were exceedingly costly, necessitating the erection of stone piles of prodigious strength, capable of resisting the shock of the enormous masses of floating ice. The minor bridges, some of them 700 to 900 feet in length, are very numerous, but, beyond the difficulty of fixing them firmly a great distance on either side of the rivers, owing to the marshy nature of the soil on the immediate banks, it needed no superlative skill on the part of the engineers who superintended their erection.

Altogether the most remarkable feature of the line will be the manner in which the trains are eventually to be transported across the Baikal, the largest lake in Asia. In America and in Denmark the system of running a train on to a monster ferry-

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boat, crossing considerable expanses of water, has now been in practical use for many years; but the distances hitherto have never exceeded seventy miles. The Toledo, Ann Harbour, and Northern Michigan Railroad possesses a service of ferry-boats that convey the trains across Lake Michigan, a distance of about seventy miles. The *Père Marquette*, the biggest ferry-boat in the world, so-called in honour of the celebrated Jesuit missionary and explorer, is 344 feet in length by 54 feet in width, and possesses four lines, whereby it can carry thirty freight cars and sixteen very up-to-date passenger corridor carriages. The difficulties to be surmounted with respect to Lake Baikal are happily less than those to be encountered on Lake Michigan. The distance from shore to shore, to begin with, is considerably less. Between Listvenitchnaya, otherwise the 'Larches,' to Misofsk is only forty miles. Notwithstanding the excessive cold, the Baikal does not freeze until quite late in January, on account of its great depth, 4,200 feet, of which 2,900 feet are below the level of the sea, forming a prodigious volume of water which takes a very long time to freeze, and an almost equally long time to thaw, for its temperature rarely rises, even in summer, above 5° C. During eight months of the year Lake Baikal is free and navigable, and it is believed that two crossings a day, always in the same channel, may eventually reduce the thickness of the ice in winter.

The building of these enormous ferry-boats has been entrusted to a well-known American firm.* They are to be larger than the *Père Marquette*, and provided with special contrivances for cutting the ice as they force their passage through it, and they are, moreover, intended to go at the rate of thirteen and a half knots an hour in free water, and four knots when cutting through the ice. The passage will take nine hours in winter and about two and a half hours in summer. Unfortunately, storms are very sudden and frequent on Lake Baikal, and, moreover, in summer travelling is often impeded by dense fogs, and it occasionally happens that boats are detained for hours and even days at a time before they dare venture across. It will certainly be very unpleasant for the

* The author is misinformed here. The *Baikal*, the great ice-breaking, train-carrying steamer, and the *Angara*, a smaller passenger-boat, have both been designed, constructed, and set up on Lake Baikal by Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth and Co., Ltd., of Newcastle-on-Tyne.
—H. N.

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passengers to be kept for many hours at Listvenitchnaya or Misofsk waiting for the weather to clear. However, they can take heart of grace; for not so very long ago they might have been detained for days at some out-of-the-way post-house, in company with a regiment of most unpleasant and unnameable bedfellows!

The difficulties of obtaining workmen for building this railway were not so great as might have been expected, thanks to the nomadic habits of the Russians, who think very little of leaving their wives and belongings at home, and going hundreds, even thousands, of miles away in search of employment. Then, again, there were already a considerable number of workpeople to be obtained on the line itself; for, as already stated, the population of Siberia is concentrated on the old postal-road, which runs in many points parallel to the railway. Convict labour was not greatly used, and when it was it proved unsatisfactory, and was soon more or less abandoned. The line, however, has taken an unusually long time to finish, because the only season during which work can be carried on in Siberia lasts but six months; but this probably proved attractive to the Russian and Asiatic workmen, as it gave them ample time, when the ground was thickly covered with snow, to return to their cabins and indulge in those day-dreams so dear to them and to all Orientals.

It is difficult to estimate the exact cost of the line, but it was at first reckoned at over £40,000,000 sterling,* of which unfortunately a considerable percentage was absolutely wasted, if not worse. Grave charges have been brought against a great number of people in connection with this line, and doubtless with reason; for it must not be forgotten that the notions of honesty entertained in Asiatic Russia are apt even now to be distinctly Byzantine. However, be this as it may, Russia can be congratulated upon having completed a brilliant achievement, which no other nation, except perhaps England or America, would have dared to undertake, especially in so short a time.

* The official estimate of the total cost of the railway is over £80,000,000, of which over £50,000,000 were spent by the end of 1899.—H. N.

CHAPTER X

THE RAILWAY THROUGH MANCHURIA

Concessions granted by China to construct the Manchurian Railway—The East Chinese Railway Company and its statutes—Method of construction and utilization of the water-ways—Military and political advantages—Branch to Port Arthur—Rapid progress already made.

THE completion of the Manchurian Railway will take place in a few years, and if there has been an apparent delay in its construction, it must not be forgotten that the harder work had already been finished on the Trans-Siberian line when the plans for the Chinese scheme were only just drawn up, and also that the obstacles to be overcome in Manchuria are infinitely greater than any that presented themselves in Siberia. These obstacles are mainly the result of the natural formation of the soil. As to the alleged political difficulties, they are very unimportant, although the line does pass through a Chinese province.

Notwithstanding that it was nominally conceded to an anonymous society, the line is absolutely in the hands of the Russian Government, to confirm which statement we have only to study the statutes of the East China Railway Company, which were drawn up by the chief promoter, M. de Witte, and formulated by the Russo-Chinese Bank between August 26 and September 8, 1896, after the signing of the Convention between the Russian and the Chinese Governments. According to these statutes, which were approved of by the Russian Government on December 4 to 16, 1896, and published in the *Messenger Officiel de l'Empire*, 'the shareholders must be either Russians or Chinese. The concession lapses at the end of eighty years from the day of the opening of the completed line. The bonds can only be issued on demand, and then only with the consent of the Russian

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Minister of Finance. The Russian Government guarantees payment of the interest and the redemption of the bonds. The company is managed by a committee, comprising a President and nine members, of whom one is Vice-President, divided between Peking and St. Petersburg. The President is chosen by the Chinese Government only ; the other members of the committee are usually elected at a general meeting of the shareholders. The chief duty of the President is to watch over the interests of the Chinese Government. The Vice-President is supposed to interest himself exclusively in the management of the company. The Russian Government has a right to superintend the progress and development of the works, both during the period of construction and of exploitation. The Russian Minister of Finance has, moreover, the right to ratify the nominations of the Vice-President, chief engineer, and of all other officials, and to approve or otherwise of any modifications which may be suggested during the construction of the line.'

These and other regulations, to which we need only allude, prove the preponderating influence of Russia in the undertaking, and we should, moreover, remember that the majority of the shares are in the hands of the Russian Government. It is therefore obvious that the Chinese President is but a mere figurehead, and that the whole enterprise is exclusively Russian. As a matter of fact, the only important reservation made in the interests of China is the following : 'After a lapse of thirty-six years from the date of the completion of the line, the Chinese Government will have the right to repurchase it, and to assume all the responsibilities of the said company.' If China does not avail herself of this right of repurchase, she will not enter into possession of the line and its dependencies until the conclusion of the eighty years from the date of its inauguration originally stipulated, under which circumstance she will certainly have a very long time to wait. The statutes also declare that the works must begin not later than August 16 to 28, 1897, and that they must be finished in six years, that is to say, in 1903, but, as a matter of fact, it is not likely that everything will be ready by that time, owing to the many obstacles the engineers have to overcome.

According to a project accepted in 1897, the Manchurian line from Onon to Nikolsk will be 1,200 miles in length, of which 890 miles will pass through the Celestial Empire, and

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310 miles through Russian territory. The total distance by rail from Cheliabinsk to Vladivostok will be 4,072 miles instead of 4,640, as stated in the original scheme, including the 40 miles across Lake Baikal.

Chinese Manchuria is composed of the two basins of the Sungari, the great affluent of the Amur, which joins this river between Blagovyeshchensk and Khabarovsk, and of the Liao-ho, which flows into the treaty port of Niu-chwang in the Government of Pechili. Between these two basins lies a zone of steppes, quite destitute of water, an eastern prolongation of the great Desert of Gobi, and 130 miles in width. To the east of the north and north-west of Manchuria rises a chain of lofty mountains, which separate the valleys of the Amur and its tributaries, the Argun and the Ussuri, from the great inland and very marshy plain watered by the Sungari and its tributary rivers.

The new line will, after leaving Onon, have to cross a lofty chain of mountains south of Trans-Baikalia, 265 miles in length, at a height of over 3,000 feet, and then descend into the valley of the Argun, to finally enter an absolutely deserted mountainous region, unexplored until the arrival of the engineering mission, some 130 miles long. Thence it will have to be carried over a height exceeding even the 3,000 feet above mentioned, and for another 330 miles will run at a height varying between 300 to 600 feet above the level of the Sungari plain, to again rise to 1,950 feet in order to cross another lofty range before redescending to Nikolsk, which is 130 feet above the level of the sea. To the difficulties thrown in the way of rapid progress by the great height and precipitous nature of the Manchurian Mountains must be added those created by the unstable condition of the soil, which, according to some travellers of my acquaintance who have explored this district, consists of one immense lake of mud. Fortunately, however, it seems that at about three or four feet below this objectionable surface exists a solid bed of gravel, which may afford an excellent foundation for the line. These unfavourable conditions were at first deemed so insurmountable that at one time many pessimists were of opinion that it would be wiser to abandon the Manchurian scheme altogether, and return to the original plan of passing through the valley of the Amur. The Tsar, however, held firm to his purpose, and the order was promulgated by His Majesty in 1898 to forthwith under-

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take the construction of that portion of the line between Onon and the Argun situated in his own territory. The waterways in Chinese territory have been utilized precisely as those in Siberia. In order to ascend the Sungari a number of flat steam-tugs were ordered from Newcastle-on-Tyne. They are unusually shallow, only drawing two feet of water, are supplied with engines of 500 horse-power, and intended to convey the rails. These are brought from Europe, viâ Vladivostok, over the Ussuri line. I remember in September being at Iman, where the Vladivostok line reaches the Ussuri, and watching with great interest one of these immense boats in process of reconstruction. I cannot help thinking, however, that the Argun would be better for the transport of heavy railway material than the shallow Sungari.

If the Russian Government so promptly determined to carry out the construction of the Manchurian Railway, it was rather on account of important political considerations than of any shortening of the route. This railway, it must be borne in mind, passes at less than 330 miles from the extreme north of the Gulf of Pechili, whereas by the Amur line the distance is double, and even then, after arriving at Vladivostok in order to reach Pechili, an unexplored and uninhabited mountainous district which extends north of the Korean Frontier would have to be passed. From the plain of the Sungari Russia can easily send troops to Mukden and Niu-chwang, and if necessary even to Peking, whereas from Vladivostok she would find it very difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to transport them by land, and, moreover, there she is by no means complete mistress of the sea.

Vladivostok already contains a number of important maritime establishments, the harbour is excellent, and in case of a war with Japan it would be a most important point of vantage. Russia, however, calculates that by means of the Manchurian Railway she will be able to transfer the Trans-Siberian terminus five degrees south of Vladivostok, to Port Arthur, whereby she dominates the Gulf of Pechili and both the land and sea routes leading to the Chinese capital. This scheme has been absolutely decided upon since 1898. The branch lines which unite the harbours of Port Arthur and Talien-wan to the nearest point of the East Chinese Railway, close to the town of Kirin, are being pushed on as actively as possible. Thousands of tons of rail, as well as a number of railway-

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engines, have already arrived from France and America at Port Arthur and Niu-chwang, and another branch of the Russian Railway is being laid in the direction of this last-named port. The branch from Port Arthur is about 530 miles, so that the total length of the Trans-Siberian line will not be greatly increased by this deviation, which will bring it to a full-stop at the extremity of the peninsula of Liao-tung, on the shores of a sea which is always free of ice. The total increase in the expenditure will not exceed £5,000,000.

CHAPTER XI

THE ALTERED RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE FAR EAST RESULTING FROM THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

The distance between Europe and the Far East by the Trans-Siberian—
Diminution of the time and expense of the sea-route—China and Japan within two weeks of Paris and London—Luxury and comfort on board the Far East express—The difficulty of transporting merchandise, which must remain much more expensive than by the sea-route—Importance of the Trans-Siberian Railway as a means of diffusing civilization in the Far East.

As already stated, between 1904 and 1905 at the latest, a continuous railroad will bring Europe in touch with the shores of the Pacific. The distances between Paris, Berlin, and London, and Vladivostok and Port Arthur are as follows :

5,852	miles from St. Petersburg, viâ Moscow.
6,370	„ „ Berlin.
7,044	„ „ Paris.
7,104	„ „ London, viâ Dover and Ostend.

European expresses would traverse the longest of these distances in one week ; but it must be remembered that it is not at present possible for trains to run over the Siberian Railway at such high speeds as from forty to fifty miles an hour. These are only possible upon the very substantial lines of Western Europe, and are indeed much in excess of what is achieved by the American Trans-Continental trains, once they cross the Mississippi, or by the Canadian Pacific, the speed on which between Montreal and Vancouver rarely exceeds twenty-five miles, and even this relatively low rate cannot be expected at first on the Trans-Siberian Railway. The rails are very light, especially on the first or western sections, and the whole railroad is, in many places, as is often the case in America, rather

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primitively constructed. It is therefore calculated that the Far East express, the weekly *train-de-luxe*, which is to be organized as soon as the line is completely finished,* will take not less than twelve days to perform the journey between London or Paris and Vladivostok and Port Arthur, which will not necessitate a greater speed than twenty miles an hour over the Siberian lines. When, however, the system is better managed and placed on the same footing as that of the Canadian Pacific, the journey may possibly be performed in a few hours under eleven days. The Trans-Siberian route will, once it is opened, be incomparably the shortest route between Europe and the Far East. It takes from Vladivostok to the Japanese ports of Nawoyetsu and Niigata on the Japanese Sea, a distance of about 480 miles, about forty hours by steamer. From thence, about 280 miles of rail, traversed in fifteen hours, will bring the capital of the Mikado within two and a half days from Vladivostok, and about fifteen days from Paris. On the other hand, the Chinese line, which is now being reorganized by an English company between Peking and Tien-Tsin, and from thence to Shan-hai-kwan at the foot of the Great Wall, is being extended to Niu-chwang, where it will join the Russian lines, and thus the journey from Paris and London to Peking can be performed in between thirteen and fifteen days. Shanghai, the principal port of China, is distant 575 miles from Port Arthur, and can be reached in two days, and thus Hong-Kong will be only seventeen days' journey from London. It now takes thirty-four days at least to get from Paris or London to Yokohama viâ the Suez Canal, and twenty-one viâ Canada, and certainly not less than twenty-eight days to reach Shanghai by either route. Twenty-five days are required to get to Hong-Kong viâ Suez, and thirty viâ America, and although this port is situated in the tropics, it could be reached much more expeditiously viâ Siberia than round by India. The Marseilles steamers touch at Saigon after a voyage of twenty-three days, but it is not probable that they will be able to compete in the matter of speed with the Trans-Siberian Railway. The capital of Cochin China, however, marks the extreme limit of this sphere; but all places situated to its north and east—Japan, Tonkin, China, and the Philippines—can be brought immeasurably nearer to Europe than was certainly ever imagined by

* This train has been running for a year as far as Irkutsk.—H. N.

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Voltaire when he wrote his letter to Count Schuvarof. It is therefore evident that, even if the maritime companies do their utmost to increase the speed of their boats, they will never be able to convey travellers to Peking, Hong-Kong, Shanghai, Tokio or Manila, in anything like the short space of time taken by the Trans-Siberian.

Another great advantage of the Trans-Siberian line is the diminution of the expense, which will be considerably less than that charged by the steamers. The price of a first-class passage from Marseilles to Hong-Kong, Shanghai, or to one of the Japanese ports, is uniformly about £70, to which must be added another £5 for travelling expenses from London to the starting-point. Viâ Canada the expense is about the same, whereas by crossing Siberia it will cost something like half. The Russian tariff is an extremely reasonable one, especially for great distances, and it is calculated that the prices from the German frontier to Vladivostok or Port Arthur will be by the ordinary trains about 11 guineas first class, and £5 third. By the *train-de-luxe* from the Russian frontier to the end of the journey it will be £18. To these expenses must, however, be added those which are always inclusive on board ships, but never on the trains—such as food, service, etc., which, however, are never alarmingly high on the German or Russian lines. If we add to the above the price of the ticket from Port Arthur to Shanghai, £6, to Hong-Kong, £12, it is clear that the cost of the journey will be about £32 from Paris to North China and Japan, and £40 to Southern China—in a word, half what is charged at present.

A rather alarming question arises as to how people will be able to endure the inevitable fatigue of passing twelve days continuously in a railway-carriage. Habit is second nature, and although there is no other line in the world of such great length, nevertheless countless Americans think nothing of spending a week or ten days constantly travelling by train. It must be remembered, too, that the carriages intended for this line will be built expressly, and contain every conceivable comfort and modern improvement. A long corridor down the centre of the compartments will enable passengers to take exercise; and, needless to say, everything will be arranged for the comfort of the sleeping department, and for the heating of the carriages in winter. Already those lines which have been opened in Siberia are supplied with restaurants providing very

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good food, and usually under the management of a Japanese, whose head cook is well skilled in the concoction of cosmopolitan dishes, and whose waiters leave nothing to be desired in point of cleanliness and civility. Even now, in out-of-the-way stations, where, a few years ago, the foot of man had never trod, travellers who have exhausted their store of novels may find a bookstall fairly well supplied with current fiction and guide-books.

The Russian Government, however, in its zeal for the comfort of Trans-Siberian travellers, has made arrangements for the installation of a super-excellent restaurant, a well-stocked library, and, in short, of all those many luxuries hitherto which are the joy and boast of Americans. One cannot expect the comfort of a first-class liner in a narrow, box-like train; but then we must remember that the passengers on board these floating palaces have to endure many miseries in the shape of sea-sickness and the numerous ills which invariably accompany a journey through the Torrid Zone. There can be no question as to the superiority of the Trans-Siberian route to the Pacific over the Canadian, inasmuch as the latter includes two long sea-journeys. In summer the Trans-Siberian line will be undoubtedly very pleasant, and even in winter the carriages can be kept warm, and, moreover, there need be no fear of an unexpected visitation from an avalanche as there is in Canada. And thus, in the course of a few years, the irrepressible globe-trotters of the two worlds, as well as the business man, to whom 'time is money,' will find a new and rapid means to reach countries which distance and the difficulties of travel have hitherto placed beyond the reach of only the most enterprising or of those who do not mind a very long sea-voyage. From the purely commercial side of the question, however, there can be no doubt that a very long time may elapse before the Trans-Siberian Railway can compete with the sea route in transporting heavy merchandise to and from the Far East, and the great commercial centres of Europe and Asia. Still, certain lighter articles—silk and tea, for instance—can certainly be brought in fair quantities, *viâ* the Siberian line, at a reasonable price. One of the great advantages of the line will be the facilities it offers for forwarding letters to and from China, Japan, etc., in considerably less than half the time now taken.

As to the social transformation which must inevitably result from the constant passage of so many people belonging to the

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highly civilized nations of the west, through a country hitherto so backward as Siberia, it may well be summed up as incalculable. That Russia will specially benefit by the creation of a line which she has built at an enormous cost is but just, and, moreover, surely the reward for her courage and enterprise. At the same time, civilization will also find a common interest in the amazing difference which so important a factor must inevitably create in the history of progress in the Far East.

PART II.—JAPAN

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND PAST HISTORY OF JAPAN

Different opinions respecting Japan and the reforms which have been carried out in that Empire within the past few years—Necessity of understanding something of Japanese history in order to appreciate the recent transformation in the country—Origin of the Japanese—Early history—The Mikados—The Japanese adopt Chinese civilization between the fifth and eighth centuries of our era—Inability for the Japanese to accept certain Chinese institutions—Decline of the absolute power of the Mikados—Military government adopted in the twelfth century—Japanese feudalism—Increase of power among the feudal lords in the fourteenth century—Civil wars and anarchy in the fifteenth century—Order re-established and the Government centralized through the action of the great military chieftains at the end of the sixteenth century—Foundation of the dynasty of the Tokugawa Shoguns—Europeans in Japan in the sixteenth century—The Japanese accept our civilization with enthusiasm—Rapid spread of Christianity—Reaction in the seventeenth century—Purely political causes—Persecution of Christians and the expulsion of foreigners—Japan isolated during nearly two centuries.

THE absolute isolation which Japan preserved for over three hundred years and her systematic rejection of any attempt at the introduction of even a ray of Western civilization, is not, it must be confessed, without fascination for all who take interest in the history of a people who, during the last thirty years, have become so popular and so progressive as the Japanese. Suddenly, and without any explicable cause, the country, which was as carefully sealed to the outer world as the enchanter's famous casket, was thrown wide open, not only to admit, but even to court, foreign progress, science and civilization, and now Japan has definitively accepted without

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any hesitation the most absolute changes and audacious innovations in her political and social systems, and has effected a transformation in her manners, ideas, and customs, not to mention costumes, such as has never before been achieved by any other nation in so brief a space of time.

At first Europe watched this extraordinary evolution with interest, not unmingled, however, with scepticism, finding it difficult to take seriously what might in the end prove but a passing fashion or the result of caprice. Many, indeed, felt anxious lest the introduction of modern civilization into a country so deliciously quaint and fascinating as Japan might destroy the charm of a population of artists, and, moreover, do irreparable damage to that exquisite art for which it is so justly celebrated. For many, Japan ought to have remained the land of lovely china, of rich lacquers, of *kakimonos*, *musmes* and chrysanthemums. Indeed, who could be expected to believe that the home of the *geisha* and of all sorts of dainty delights, of dwarf trees and liliputian tea-gardens, could possibly acclimatize the smoky industries, the strict militarism and the matter-of-fact judicial and political systems of our humdrum civilization? As well expect such a transformation in a world of butterflies and glittering dragon-flies as in the Empire of the Mikado. One eminent writer declared that 'the Japan of to-day is but a bad translation'; and yet another says: 'I find Japan a sort of anæmic dwarf. I know that she is of antediluvian antiquity, but for all that I cannot help thinking this little old mummy, bedecking herself in the trappings of Western civilization, supremely ridiculous.' This was the opinion held not only by casual visitors to Japan, but also by not a few who had lived for years in the country, and who were never happy excepting when contrasting the solid qualities of the Chinese, their circumspection, their prudence, and their profound attachment to ancient customs, with the intense vanity and frivolity of the Japanese.

What could not be achieved by twenty-five years of hard work and peaceful progress in the way of convincing Europe of the earnestness of her intentions Japan did in less than six months by her military successes. When Europe beheld the triumphant achievements of the Mikado's army, she had to confess that Japan was not quite the butterfly she had imagined, and began to study with greater attention the remarkable work which had been accomplished in that Empire.

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But the wonderful progress made in Japan during the last half of this century would not seem so extraordinary were the history of the Land of Flowers and its people better known. By the light of the past, the Revolution of 1868, which led to the suppression of the feudal system in Japan, and to the opening of the ports throughout the country, becomes clear and sequent.

In the fifth century of our era Japanese history begins to assume definite form, and the chronicles of the Kojiki and the Nihongi, which were written in the eighth century, cease to record mythological events and to deal with those purely human. Since that date the ancestors of the present Emperor have been ruling sovereigns over the two meridional islands Kiu-Siu and Sikoku, and the south-western section of the great Island of Hondo. According to tradition, they had already been reigning princes for over a thousand years, and their history, like that of almost every other great dynasty, stretches back into the night of time, when the world was peopled by gods and demigods. The first Emperor, Jimmu-Tenno, was a grandson of Amaterasu, Goddess of the Sun, herself a great-granddaughter of the gods Izanaghi and Izanami, who were the actual founders of Japan. We next learn that Japan sprang direct from the hands of the gods, whereas all the other countries of the world, even those from whom she is pleased to accept modern civilization, originated through the evolution of natural forces. Jimmu-Tenno having alighted on this earth from heaven on the island of Kiu-Siu, passed thence viâ the Inland Sea to Hondo, where, after conquering 'people of the same race as his own subjects,' who inhabited these parts, he subdued the whole of the western part of the island, even to the zone of the central forests, 'which were peopled by barbarians.' In the year 660 B.C., he established himself in the province of Yamato, where they pretend in our day to have discovered his tomb. It is from this very early date that the Japanese begin their history. Jimmu-Tenno was succeeded by several generations of Mikados, of whom the first seventeen were centenarians, who lived between a hundred and a hundred and forty years each. In those distant times, the gods, it seems, took the same personal interest in Japanese affairs as they condescended to do in those of the Trojans. The history, however, of Japan, in its legendary period, like that of most other countries, is exceedingly sketchy and contains nothing of

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a positive character until the year 200 A.D., when an Amazonian Empress, who rejoiced in the rather startling name of Jingo, headed a successful campaign against the Koreans.

Contemporary historical research has resulted in clearing away a good deal of the mist which shrouded in a veil of mystery the primitive history of Japan. It would seem, however, for instance, that some centuries before our era the Mongolian pirates indulged in frequent incursions upon the western coast of the country in much the same unpleasant manner as did, some thousand years later, the Normans in Europe. After exterminating the natives, who were not numerous, they established themselves, together with their wives and families, in the island of Kiu-Siu. Later on, an illustrious chief, who turns out on closer acquaintance to be none other than Jimmu-Tenno, of legendary fame, crossed over to the great island and 'found it peopled by inhabitants of the same race as himself'; hence it becomes evident that there were two distinct migrations from the mainland of the ancestors of the actual Japanese, a fact confirmed in a double cycle of heroic legends, one of which deals with the island of Kiu-Siu and the other with the province of Idzuma, situated on the west coast of Hondo, an island opposite Korea.

The Japanese, therefore, form a part of the great family scientifically known as the Uralo-Altaic, which includes the Finns, the Hungarians, the Turks, the Mongols and the Koreans. The different branches of this family appear to be less closely united than are those of the white race, but on the other hand, their languages, which are distinctly agglutinant, have certainly a common origin. It should be remarked that the Chinese do not form part of this group, constituting a family quite apart, whose language is distinctly monosyllabic and rhythmic. Their handwriting, however, was adopted by the Japanese between a thousand and twelve hundred years ago, as were also a number of words describing objects which up to that time were unknown to them, and probably introduced from China. If it is an undoubted fact that the Chinese and Japanese belong to the Yellow Race, the link which unites them is quite as remote as that which exists between a Frenchman and a German on the one hand, or an Arab and a Kabyle on the other. A superficial analogy between the Chinese and the Japanese must not mislead us. The very sparse indigenous race which the Korean immigrants found upon the south and

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south-west of Japan were of the same family as the Ainos of our time, of whom some 15,000 still linger in Yezo, the great southern island of the Archipelago; and, moreover, they belonged to the same race as the Ghilaks of the Amur, and the tribes to the north-east of Siberia. These Ainos, who exist by hunting and fishing, are considered to be the hairiest people on earth; they are mere savages, quite as dirty in their habits as the Japanese are clean. They had in all probability little or nothing to do with the formation of the actual population.

The civilization of the ancient Japanese until the fifth or sixth century of our era was, it seems, most primitive. Writing was unknown, and the people were but just emancipated from the Stone Age, their knowledge of the use of metal being very limited. They owned a few domestic animals, the horse and the dog, and also poultry. They cultivated rice, millet, barley, two sorts of peas, and in addition to these cereals the sea and the rivers supplied them with fish, and the forests with flesh. They apparently ate more meat than do their descendants of the present day, a fact due, of course, to the introduction of Buddhism, whose followers are, or should be, vegetarians. As to their houses, they were of wood and extremely simple.

The Shinto religion, which has become once more the State religion, has a mythology formed out of legends dealing with the generation of the gods who preceded the advent of the Imperial family. Out of the eight hundred myriads of divinities only some half-dozen are now venerated. Among these is Amaterasu, Goddess of the Sun, and ancestress of Jimmu-Tenno. The spirits of the deceased Mikados and of certain heroes are known as *Kami*, 'superior beings,' and are honoured by this title, as are also the ancestors of each family. Beyond this Shintoism recognises neither dogma nor ethics. A writer of the last century thus apologizes for this easy-going creed. 'It was,' says he, 'invented by the Chinese, because they are a very immoral people; but in Japan morality is not needed, since the Japanese have only to act according to the dictates of their hearts to do well. To obey the Emperor, who is the descendant of the gods, and almost a god himself, and follow one's natural inclinations, are the only precepts imposed upon its followers by Shintoism, and a pilgrimage to the nearest temple once a year the only kind of divine service exacted. There are no public ceremonies, excepting an occasional hieratic dance performed by young girls. In the wooden temples roofed with

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bark, which are supposed to reproduce the habitations of the primitive Japanese, there are no ornaments, no sculpture, and no representations whatever of the Divinity. The priests, who wear no distinctive costume, and who lead the lives of ordinary citizens, occasionally don a rich garment with long flowing sleeves, go to the various temples and perform certain very simple rites in the presence of a mystic mirror to be found in every temple, a facsimile of one given by the Goddess of the Sun to her grandson Jimmu-Tenno, as an emblem of purity. A white horse will also sometimes be seen within the precincts of the temples. The only sacrifice is the offering of fruits, fish, wine, and rice, accompanied by the recitation of certain prayers in the ancient Japanese language ; this is, it must be confessed, an exceedingly primitive cultus, but it was the only one known in Japan until the sixth century, at which epoch began the great development of Chinese civilization in Japan, originally introduced, however, by the invasion of Korea by the Japanese armies at the commencement of the third century. The Korean envoys who brought the annual tribute to their Japanese conquerors eventually became the pioneers of civilization among the more primitive race which had overcome them. They brought into the country, for instance, in the year 284 the art of writing. Possibly this date is erroneous and ought to be 400, the period when, according to a very ancient tradition, the first mention of medicine is made in the national history, on the occasion of the grave illness of the then reigning Mikado, who was cured by a Korean physician. Then followed the silkworm, and the mulberry-tree, the arts of spinning and weaving. Finally, in 552 the first image of Buddha appeared, and eventually led to the introduction of the religion of Sakya-muni.

From this period until the beginning of the seventh century there was a perfect invasion of the arts, customs, and opinions, religious, social, and political, of the neighbouring continent. Then was for the first time displayed that ardour which is so peculiar to the Japanese, and, if I might so say, also of that rage for civilization—true, it was then only Chinese civilization—which characterizes them at the present day.

Buddhism triumphed without formidable opposition, and at the beginning of the seventh century there were not less than forty-six temples and 1,385 priests or Buddhist monks in Japan. The Chinese calendar was adopted, the language,

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writing and literature of China were studied with enthusiasm. Ambassadors and special missions were sent to the continent to examine on the spot the religion, the arts, the industries and also the government of the Chinese and their political and judicial system. Thus it so came to pass that feudalism was introduced centuries before it was imposed upon Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. At the death of the Empress Suiko in 628, under whose reign all these reforms took place, Japan was completely remodelled after the image and likeness of China. The remarkable feature about this transformation is its resemblance to the revolution now in progress. It was effected without the least opposition or violence. The methods used then were the same as those which are being employed to-day : the sending forth of missions and the employment of foreigners by the Government to study and introduce everything that was likely to improve the country and its people. Above all, there existed a universal goodwill and eagerness to stimulate the advance movement. Japan, therefore, by her wonderful powers of assimilation, was suddenly converted from a barbarian to a civilized country. Nevertheless, however deep-rooted was the influence of China, it did not interfere with the architecture and the art of the Japanese, which remained distinct. The good sense of this able people taught them to distinguish between the different elements in the civilization which they were introducing, to reject those which did not suit them, and to transform others which were better fitted to their inclination. A reaction, however, set in between the eighth and the eleventh centuries which enabled the Japanese to recover sufficient of their identity and yet retain most of the innovations in their industries, agriculture, and fine arts, in the culture of which latter they eventually surpassed their masters. The new religion suited them admirably, and it remains to this day much less corrupt in Japan than it is among the Chinese themselves. The official and administrative system introduced from China, being opposed to the natural bent of the Japanese mind, was, however, soon rejected, and they returned to their own, which suited them better.

The mandarinat was never acclimatized, and the principle of heredity always remained in force. The divers degrees of dignity, at first twelve in number and then nineteen, were never given, as in China, to individuals, but to families as

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hereditary titles. The position, for instance, of Prime Minister, or *Kwambaku*, became hereditary in a great family of the Court, that of the Fujiwaras, from which, moreover, according to tradition, the Empress was invariably selected. Then began to manifest itself that very peculiar trait in the history of Japan of real authority very rarely being vested in the hand of the man supposed to exercise it. The Mikado, who, from the ninth century onwards, was invariably a child, and abdicated in youth to retire into a monastery, is supposed to reign and yet never govern. This was the beginning of a system of Imperial self-effacement which lasted over a thousand years. Presently we discover that the hereditary *Kwambaku* also exercises no authority, which is exactly the opposite of what took place in Europe in the Middle Ages, where, if a Sovereign retired into privacy, his Prime Minister was pretty certain to become forthwith correspondingly prominent. In the Middle Ages, at an epoch when Europe was engaged in fighting and slaughtering, the Court of Kioto was a centre of art, pleasure and poetry, in which, however, authority was completely set aside.

In the meantime, feudalism established itself in the country. Side by side with the effeminate aristocracy of the *kuges*, certain nobles descended from collateral branches of the Imperial family, and who in their time had occupied great official positions, both in the provinces and in the capital, leaving subalterns to fulfil their duties, now formed themselves into a military and territorial aristocracy, and, whilst profound peace reigned in the greater part of the country, carried on a war against the Koreans in its south-eastern limits, and against the Ainos, who had been driven back to the north of Hondo, in the north-east. The custom imported from China by the Japanese of separating the civil from the military functionaries, combined with a genius for heredity, led in the course of time to the creation of many great military families, under whose authority or lead clans of soldiers grouped and gradually separated themselves from the rest of the population. The chiefs of these clans in due time became, especially in the tenth century, in the north and eastern provinces, independent, so that by degrees their influence during the two succeeding centuries in the Government was paramount, and the Court of Kioto was the object of perpetual dissensions between two great military families, the Taira, and the Minamoto, both

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descendants of Emperors of the eighth and ninth centuries. They had each a claimant to the Imperial throne, who was invariably an infant. A Taira, Kiyomori, governed Japan from 1156 to 1181 in the position of Prime Minister. He ordered the Minamoto family to be massacred; one or two of its members, however, escaped, among them Yoritomo, the son of the chief. In due course of time this Yoritomo created a revolution in Kwanto in his own favour. Upon learning of the death of Kiyomori he straightway marched upon Kioto in company with his bastard brother, Yoshitsune, who had escaped from a monastery to which he had been relegated. Between them they seized the capital and proclaimed a child of seven years of age Emperor in the place of the Mikado Antoku, who was not much older, and who was carried off by the Taira to the island of Kiu-Siu. The great naval battle of Dan-no-ura, won by Yoshitsune in 1185 at the mouth of the Inland Sea, completed the ruin of the Taira, who, together with their Emperor, were nearly all slain in the disaster to their fleet, which made Yoritomo master of Japan.

Yoritomo behaved with the utmost ingratitude to his brother Yoshitsune, who had so largely contributed to his success. He ordered him never to appear again at Court, and sent a group of assassins to pursue him to the farther end of the island. His life was frequently saved, thanks to the shrewdness of the giant monk Benkei and the devotion of the dancing-girl Shidzuka. The adventures of the brave Yoshitsune and his death by suicide has supplied Japanese literature with a number of interesting and picturesque legends not unlike those which delighted our ancestors in the Middle Ages.

After these events, the feudal system was firmly established in Japan for over seven centuries, and we hear no more of Chinese methods of administration. This is mainly due to the warlike character of the Japanese people and to the increasing power of the feudal chiefs, who had naturally, in order to maintain their reputation, to keep the country in a perpetual ferment of political or civil war. The striking difference between the feudal system in Japan and that which existed contemporaneously in Europe is that the Japanese ruler was never the Sovereign. He was called the Shogun, or Sei-i-tai-Shogun literally, 'General charged with the duty of subjugating the barbarians.' This title was first bestowed upon Yoritomo in 1192. It was the Shogun's duty to govern. In

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theory he was responsible to the Emperor, whose humble servant he was supposed to be. As a matter of fact, the Mikado had long since ceased to interfere in the government, and lived in the palace of Goshô at Kioto in the midst of luxury, his generals and ministers paying him no other respect than that of mere ceremony.

The new power of the Shogunate instituted by Yoritomo was not long before it also became attenuated. In 1198, immediately after the death of its founder, his father-in-law, Hojo Tokimasa, seized the reins of government, and in 1219 the posterity of Yoritomo was already extinct. The supreme authority was by this time definitely vested in the family of the Hojo, whose chief took the title of Shikken, or Regent, and chose and dethroned the Shoguns, usually children, at his pleasure, selecting them either from the Imperial family or from that of the Fujiwaras. The period during which this curious regime lasted is perhaps the most brilliant and the most prosperous in the history of Japan in the Middle Ages; but eventually Japan fell into a sort of feudal anarchy, bearing a close affinity to that which existed in Germany at the same epoch. The power of the Hojos was finally broken in 1334, thanks to the combined action of the feudal lords, aided by a Mikado named Go-Daigo, who happened for once to be possessed of some energy. The executive, however, did not remain long in the hands of this Emperor. His chief lieutenant, Ashikago Takauji, rose up against him, obliged him to flee from his capital, and replaced him by another member of the Imperial family, at the same time electing himself Shogun. From 1337 to 1392 Japan had two rival dynasties of Mikados. Notwithstanding these disturbances, the Court of the Shoguns Ashikagas was very often extremely brilliant, both from the literary and the artistic point of view. During the fifteenth century civil wars raged again, and the authority of both Mikado and Shogun consequently dwindled into insignificance. In the provinces the warriors, known as *samourai*, gradually became hereditary, recognising no authority but that of their feudal lords, the daimios. The country became poor, the population rapidly dwindled, and all the arts except that of the armourer tended to disappear. The opening years of the sixteenth century beheld Japan in a pitiable plight indeed, the population decimated by terrible epidemics and earthquakes, as well as civil wars, and such was her condition that she might

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have been compared to France after the Hundred Years', or Germany after the Thirty Years', War. When St. Francis Xavier visited the country in 1550 he was appalled by its misery. It was a far cry then from the Japan of his days to the Cipango, the golden land of promise so greatly vaunted by Marco Polo three centuries earlier. The feudal system in Japan, however, had been of great use in forming the character of the people; it preserved in them those virile qualities so conspicuously absent among the Chinese.

The close of the sixteenth century witnessed the decline and fall of feudalism throughout the Empire, which led to the re-establishment of centralization. This was due to the energy of three great military chiefs, Nobunaga, Ieyas, and Hideyoshi, the first of whom was descended from the Taira and the second from the Minamoto, and therefore both were essentially aristocratic. The third, however, was about the only personage in medieval Japan who ever rose from the ranks to occupy a towering position in the State. Ota Nobunaga, after having considerably aggrandized the very small principality which he had inherited from his father, interfered in the quarrels of a succession of Shoguns, and deposing in 1573 the last Ashikaga, seized the Government as Prime Minister, and compelled the daimios to obey him. He curbed the encroachments of the Buddhist monks, who had accumulated during the long period of the civil wars immense landed estates; but at last, hemmed in by his many enemies, this remarkable man ended his career by disembowelling himself, an unpleasant but evidently popular method of committing suicide with the Japanese.

Hideyoshi, who from groom had become principal lieutenant to Nobunaga, extinguished all further spirit of resistance on the part of the feudal barons. Once Japan was united, he wished to establish its power beyond the limits of the Empire, and for this purpose sent an expedition into Korea, which, however, only resulted in ruining that country, thanks to the quarrels and dissensions which took place between the Japanese generals, some of whom were Christians and others Buddhists.

At the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, the power of the daimios, even that of the great princes of the south-west, Choshiu and Satsuma, was already much attenuated, and everything was ready for a change similar to that which took place in France under Louis XI. It led to the quasi-independence of the lords being suppressed in favour of a feudality of a purely domestic

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character. The principal factor in this change was Tokugawa Ieyas, who had been one of the chief generals of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. Placed by this last at the head of the council of the regency, which had to exercise power during the minority of his son Hideyori, Ieyas was not long before he quarrelled with his co-regents. Assuming the command of an army, recruited in the north and the east of the Empire, he in 1600 defeated at Sekigahara the united forces of the clans of the south and the west, and thus made himself master of Japan. Instead of a purely ephemeral sovereignty, he founded a dynasty and a régime which lasted for 250 years, as the result of his ability and that of his son and grandson. Before proceeding further in detailing the political and social organization of this interesting country, it will be well to pause and consider an event of supreme importance which took place in the sixteenth century, and the effect of which explains much that is now happening. I refer to the period of the great Portuguese colonization, when that now small kingdom had annexed vast possessions in the Indies, and had added new ones in Cochin China and in the south of China to her Empire.

In 1542, three Portuguese, who had taken passage on board a Chinese junk, were wrecked upon the southern coast of Japan. Among the other passengers happened to be a Chinaman, who volunteered as interpreter. He seems, however, to have entertained for foreigners the same contempt as that in which they are held by his compatriots in this year of grace 1900. He described the Portuguese to the Japanese as people who were very little better than savages, who did not know how to write Chinese, and as being, moreover, profoundly ignorant of the art of eating their food with chopsticks. We may conclude, therefore, that these worthy Portuguese did not produce a very favourable impression. In 1545, the navigator Fernan Mendez Pinto arrived at the little island of Tanegashima, to the south of Kiu-Siu, and was well received by the feudal lord of that district. The powerful Prince of Bungo, father-in-law to the Lord of Tanegashima, having heard of the strangers, invited them to his capital in the north-east of Kiu-Siu, and entertained them very handsomely. Pinto was so favourably impressed by all he saw that two years later he returned to the same spot, carrying off with him two Japanese fugitives from justice. They had the fortune of being converted to Christianity by St. Francis Xavier, and served him as in-

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terpreters when the renowned Jesuit missionary landed on August 15, 1549, at Kagoshima, the capital of the Prince of Satsuma. The earliest converts were a few relatives of the interpreters. The Prince received the saint very favourably, and the Princess insisted upon him composing for her benefit a summary of the Articles of the Christian Faith, together with the translation of the principal prayers. St. Francis immediately edited a Japanese version of the Catechism and a translation of the Credo. Unfortunately, in the course of time the Prince of Satsuma was much offended by certain Portuguese sailors, who, probably on account of the obstacles they encountered in the attempt, refused to land in his dominions, and betook themselves and their merchandise further on to those of his rivals. Greatly annoyed at their behaviour, the prince now ordered the missionaries to quit his dominions. St. Francis obeyed and proceeded to the capital of the Prince of Bungo, who was highly delighted to see him, and assisted him in a number of ways to found churches and missions, so that when the great missionary left Japan in 1551, Christianity was fairly established in the country. Presently Japan was inundated with Portuguese missionaries, sailors, and merchants. The Japanese, with an eye as much to business as to social improvement, encouraged this influx of strangers in the hope of its leading to a profitable commerce being established between the two countries. The Jesuits, too, whose influence the Japanese quickly recognised, were treated with the utmost cordiality and respect. So great was the Japanese power of assimilation, that Mendez Pinto tells us that, having made a present of an arquebus to the Prince of Tanegashima, that potentate caused it to be imitated, and very soon afterwards the navigator was shown six weapons exactly like his own. A few months later there were 30,000 distributed in the province of Bungo, and 300,000 throughout the country. These figures may be taken with a grain of salt; nevertheless, there must have been a very firm foundation for the story. In 1582, forty years after the arrival of the Portuguese, artillery played a great part in the Battle of Shigutake, one of Hideyoshi's greatest victories.

Whether material or spiritual motives were at the bottom of the rapid progress made by Christianity at this period it would be difficult to say. Princes, literary men, priests, even Buddhists, rich and poor alike, presented themselves in hundreds to

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receive baptism, and even Nobunaga, if he did not actually profess the new religion, at any rate favoured its propaganda. At the time of his death in 1582 there were fully 600,000 converts in the centre and the south of Japan; half the daimios in the island of Kiu-Siu had embraced Christianity, together with the greater part of their subjects; the Prince of Tosa, in the island of Sikokou, and many daimios in the centre and west of the great island had also been baptized. There were not less than 200 churches, some of which were even situated in the capital of the Empire. In Nagasaki, which in 1567 had become the centre of foreign commerce, there was scarcely a pagan left. In 1582 an embassy, sent to Rome by the Princes of Bungo, Arima and Omura, was solemnly received by Pope Sixtus V. It afterwards proceeded on a tour through Portugal, Spain, and Italy. Although Hideyoshi apparently did not display the same enthusiasm for Christianity as did his neighbours, nevertheless, their number continued to increase; and during the last ten years of the sixteenth century it is believed there were over a million converts to the Roman Church out of a population of between eight or ten millions, a marvellous record for fifty years' missionary labour. Unfortunately, it was not to last long, although, to be sure, the brief epoch of its success was marked by a material progress quite as astonishing as the spiritual, for, with the religion of the Europeans, the Japanese had adopted a great many of their arts and industries. Tobacco, for instance, began to be cultivated, and boats built on European models transported Japanese trade as far afield as the Gulf of Mexico. Strangers could travel from one end of the country to the other without fear of being molested by the natives, and St. Francis Xavier had every reason to say that the 'Japanese nation was the delight of his heart.' Presently Hideyoshi became alarmed lest the system of government which he had formulated might eventually be overthrown through the missionaries and by possible religious wars occasioned by so abrupt a change in the opinions and ethics of an entire nation. He feared lest the admission into the country of so many merchants and missionaries might not be the prelude to another invasion of a hostile character, resulting in the conquest and annexation of Japan to some European power or other. It is even said that a Portuguese captain was sufficiently imprudent to inform Hideyoshi that the King, his master, had the intention of sending priests into the dominions

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of the Mikado with the object of ultimately landing troops, who, aided by the native Christians, should effect his overthrow. Whether these words were ever spoken or not is uncertain, but they were undoubtedly the expression of the thoughts of contemporary European Sovereigns, a fact which the Japanese soon learnt when they came to be a little better acquainted with the proceedings of the Portuguese in India. In a word, the suspicions of the Japanese rulers were awakened, and even the brilliant services rendered by the Christian General Konishi could not efface them, and the impression was further increased by the rivalry which existed between the Jesuits and the Franciscans, and also between the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the English and the Dutch, who were perpetually accusing each other of most malevolent designs. In 1587 Hideyoshi issued an edict ordering all missionaries to leave Japan within twenty-four days, which, however, remained a dead-letter until 1597, when it was put into force—in consequence of the imprudence of the Spanish Franciscans, who began preaching in the open air, and even in the streets of Kioto, which resulted in a riot and in seventeen native Christians being put to death at Nagasaki. Ieyas continued the persecution throughout 1614, as did his son and grandson, who, between them, contrived to extirpate Christianity in every part of the Empire before 1638. For years the inhabitants of Nagasaki were condemned to trample upon the Crucifix in the presence of the authorities, and even as late as 1868 placards were still to be seen stuck up in the streets offering rewards for the denunciation of members of the ‘forbidden, lying, and corrupt sect.’

The immediate result of this persecution, which was extremely severe, was the exclusion from Japan of all outside influence, for the foreigner and Christianity had become in the eyes of the Government a moral, social, as well as political dissolvent. The evil conduct of the European sailors, who, even according to the statement of the missionaries themselves, had carried off women and children in great numbers, to sell into slavery at Manila or Macao, and their dissolute behaviour generally, cast opprobrium upon the religion which they professed, and thus it came to pass that the Japanese accused the Christians of not practising the ethics they taught, but, on the contrary, of giving a bad example by their disrespect to parents, superiors, and to all in authority.

In 1609 and 1611 Ieyas granted the Dutch the right of

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trading all over the island, but his son, Hidetada, being suspicious of their good intentions, closed all harbours to them, excepting those of Hirado and Nagasaki in the island of Kiu-Siu, and, furthermore, prohibited the Japanese from leaving their country under any pretext. From 1637 the Dutch and the Chinese alone were authorized to trade in Japanese waters, and then only through the port of Nagasaki. Confined within the narrow limits of the island of Deshima, condemned to submit to the most abject humiliations, and never allowed to go ashore excepting once a year on a special mission to Yedo, when they conveyed presents to the Shogun, before whom they had to crawl upon their hands and knees, the agents of the Dutch East India Company entertained with Japan commercial relations of the scantiest kind. With this sole exception, Japan, which had acted in so liberal a manner towards foreigners, became in a short time a sealed book to the outer world.

CHAPTER II

JAPAN AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1868

Progress demoralized in Japan under the Shoguns Tokugawa—Imperial Court, Mikado and *kuges*, feudal society, Shogun, Daimios, *samourai*, and people—Foundation of the political régime—Military preponderance of the Shogun—Seclusion of the Mikado—Divisions among the Daimios—Exclusion of strangers—Artistic development and economy—Progress of civilization—Decline of the Shogunate—Position of Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century—Foreigners begin to re-enter the country in 1854—Scandal created by the opening of the ports—The Court and the clans in the south-west provinces hostile both to Western civilization and the Shoguns—Fall of the Shogunate—Restoration of the Mikado and introduction of European civilization.

WE have already seen that the Emperor, or Mikado, was deprived of all authority, and retained only the outward attributes of his Imperial dignity. He dwelt in his palace of Goshô surrounded by 155 *kuges*, or noble families, all of whom were descended from the Imperial house, but whose duties were merely ceremonial. In order to prevent any possibility on their part of the *kuges* interfering with him, Ieyas reduced the Court to absolute poverty. He fixed the civil list of the Mikado—according to custom, in kind—at 9,000 *kokus*,* or 44,550 bushels of rice; as to the *kuges*, many of them lived in the most straightened circumstances. To still more completely isolate the Mikado the feudal princes were never on any pretext allowed to enter Kioto.

These princes, or daimios, who were the leaders of the military order, of whom the Shogun was the chief, were divided into five classes, according to their precedence and importance: firstly, the three great Gosanké families, who reigned over the provinces of Owari, Kii and Mito, and were descended from

* A *koku* equals 4·95 bushels.

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the three elder sons of Ieyas : they enjoyed the privilege of electing from amongst their number the Shogun in case of the failure of direct heirs ; secondly, the sixteen *kokushu* daimios, whose ancestors possessed their fiefdoms before the elevation of Ieyas, which he had considerably reduced as a punishment for their having taken up arms against him, and whose revenues ranged between 750,000 and 5,000,000 bushels ; thirdly, the nineteen *kammong* daimios, who were the immediate relatives or vassals of the Tokugawas, and descendants of Ieyas' favourite generals, among whom he distributed the fiefdoms he had confiscated from his enemies : they were eventually the chief supporters of the Shogunate, being, however, not so rich as the above, possessing only between 50,000 and 1,600,000 bushels of revenue ; fourthly, the 88 *tozamma* daimios ; and fifthly, the 110 *foudai* daimios, who were not infrequently cadets of one of the two preceding classes. They possessed an income of at least 50,000 bushels, but rarely more, and their estates were proportionally small. Nevertheless, there were eight *tozammias* and sixteen *foudais* who enjoyed between them a revenue of 500,000 bushels, and, who, when united, were sufficiently powerful to be very troublesome.

Next came the *samourai*, forming about a twentieth of the entire population of the Empire. They were a distinct military class under the daimios, and were distinguished by wearing, even in infancy, the two swords Ieyas called the 'living soul of the *samourai*.' Excepting in one or two principalities at the extreme south, notably at Satsuma, they were never agriculturists, but, despising all manual labour, lived on salaries paid by their chief. Exceedingly brave and punctilious in all points of honour, they were addicted to vendetta, and added to their other peculiarities the ferocious custom of *hara-kiri*, which obliged them on the least insult to disembowel themselves with a small sword, an unpleasant rite into which they were initiated when still very young. They were ever ready to shed their blood for their prince and fanatically attached to their clan. It was from them that the troops, as well as all the minor officials in the various principalities, were recruited. The *samourai* were not only military, but literary, and corresponded to our professional classes, and their opinions only had the slightest influence on the affairs of the country. When a *samourai*, for some reason or other, found himself without a master, either because he had been expelled from

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his service or his lord had been deprived by the Shogun of his titles and estates, he sometimes turned *ronin*, or knight-errant, more often than not a brigand, and occasionally a redresser of wrongs, but as a rule a fellow capable of the worst sort of crime as well as of the most heroic acts of chivalry. In times of trouble these *ronin* were wont to form themselves into bands and offer their services to a popular prince, and when accepted, their opinion and influence sometimes became of considerable weight.

Nineteen-twentieths of the population consisted of the *heimin*, or commoners. Of this class the peasantry was by far the most numerous and esteemed. Next came the artisans, then the merchants, for be it remembered that feudal Japan, like feudal Europe, held trade and tradesmen in supreme contempt. Finally the two classes of pariahs, the *eta*, or 'dirty people,' who followed the profession of leather-dressers, tanners, curriers, knackers, grave-diggers, etc., then the *hinin* (not men), and the beggars.

Only on certain rare occasions, when a daimio wished to increase the number of his men-at-arms, and recruited some of his *samourai* from the *heimin*, or, again, when a *ronin*, tired of vagabondage, embraced some trade or other and contrived to lose himself among the people, were the barriers between class and class ever broken down, and thus society in Japan remained strictly confined within its narrow boundaries for over two centuries. Notwithstanding these restrictions, the country enjoyed during this period a profound peace and great prosperity. Both Ieyas and Iemitsu understood to perfection how to apply the maxim, 'Divide in order to reign,' whereby they broke up the influence of the daimios, which, when united, might have proved formidable. This they contrived to do by isolating them from the Imperial Court, and creating between them divergences of interest, and by fermenting among them a spirit of hatred and jealousy. Ieyas had not dared dispossess all his adversaries after his victory, but he confiscated a part at least of their domains, out of which he created a number of fiefs, which he distributed among his allies and soldiers. The descendants of these, the *kammong* and *foudai* princes, being ever at war with the *kokushu* and the *tozamma*, obtained protection from the Shoguns by establishing a common bond of interest, being fully aware that the downfall of the Tokugawas would be sure to involve their own.

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A danger undoubtedly presented itself to the south-east of the Empire, for here the domains of the *kokushu* princes of Choshiu, Satsuma and Hizen and others nearly as powerful formed a continuous line of territory, and consequently a storm rising in that quarter might have been fatal to the Shogunate ; but so long as these great vassals received no support from a foreign power, the military preponderance of the Shogun was safe. This state of affairs eventually gave rise to a rigorous exclusion of foreigners. Divided among themselves, isolated from all external influences, deprived of all communication with the Court, the daimios in due time lost a great deal of influence in their own principalities. By virtue of the Sankin law, promulgated in 1635 by Iemitsu, and solemnly ratified by the Mikado, they were compelled to sojourn at least one year out of two at Yedo, and to leave their women and children during the following year in that capital as hostages. In this manner their initiative was enfeebled, and as they were obliged in great part to leave the administration of their own affairs in the hands of subordinates, they soon became mere idlers, under the constant supervision of a swarm of spies, who reported to the Shogun any attempt on their part to resist his authority, or to conspire against him. Notwithstanding its many drawbacks, this administrative system, although it unquestionably weakened the political character of the Japanese, was in the long-run, by securing a prolonged peace, exceedingly beneficial to the country, especially as regards the development of art and literature, and it is from the period of the Tokugawas that dates all that is finest in Japanese architecture, painting, sculpture, lacquering, including the temples of Nikko and the noblest specimens of Satsuma faience. In the meantime civilization had made rapid progress, and the intellectual influence of China upon Japan was paramount. The Chinese classics, formerly neglected by the Japanese, were now, thanks to the initiative of Ieyas, studied with ardour both at the Court of his successors and at that of the Mikado, and were even publicly taught in the ever-increasing number of schools. And thus it came to pass that when the Europeans returned in 1854 they found Japan more completely under the influence of Chinese art and literature than had their ancestors in the sixteenth century.

The causes which brought about the revolution of 1868, which resulted in the suppression of the Shogunate and of feudalism, and in the rapid introduction of European civiliza-

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tion, were quite as important and as deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of Japan as were those which led to the French Revolution in 1789, which, it will be remembered, had been brewing for a very long time before its eventual outbreak. Politically, the decadence of the Shogunate commenced in 1652, after the death of Iemitsu, and especially at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the Tokugawas began gradually to decline, precisely as had done the various dynasties that had preceded them. Surrounded by a brilliant court and enlightened patrons both of arts and letters, the Shoguns disdained occupying themselves with public affairs, which they left in the hands of the Gorogio, a council composed of five *foudai* daimios and their subordinates. This substitution of a rather effete bureaucracy for the old but energetic feudal system soon inspired the great vassals with a hope of being able to overthrow their former masters. They perceived that it was easy to pick a hole in the Shogunate from the doctrinal point of view, even in the name of those very Confucian theories upon which they had the pretension to base their supremacy. As a matter of fact, although the system of paternal government extolled by the illustrious Chinese philosopher is by no means opposed to feudalism, when closely examined into, it shows that there was no place in it for the Shogunate, since it does not admit of any intermediary between the father and his children.

At the same time, in the eighteenth century a whole college of literary men and a distinct school of literature rose, whose principal object was the study of the ancient texts, to collate, publish, and interpret them, whereby certain political and religious conclusions were arrived at, tending to prove that the only legitimate power in Japan was the autocracy of the Mikado, the descendant of the gods, and the only true religion Shintoism, and that patriotism, moreover, demanded the restoration of the ancient political and social organization which had existed in the Empire long before the introduction of Buddhism, feudalism, and of Chinese ideas in general. If these theories did not interest the people, they certainly, and very effectively, created a breach between the literary classes and the *samourai*, on the one hand, and the Shogunate and its supporters, who by this time had become not only unpopular with the productive classes of the nation, but were even looked upon in the light of a tax, against which the

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people very naturally rebelled, failing to see why they should be called upon to support an idle and otherwise useless caste.

In 1700 the Government, financially embarrassed, was compelled to diminish the number of charges imposed upon it by the feudal system, and to increase taxation, whereupon the merchants deemed it prudent to conceal the exact amount of their fortunes, and the peasants, who paid their lords a third or a half of their harvests, were not infrequently ransomed by the *ronin*. Under these circumstances the feudal system could no longer endure, since it was now brought into contact with a society richer and better organized than itself, and thus it became impossible for the Japanese Government to prevent the penetration into the Empire of European ideas, which filtered through the one port, Nagasaki, left partially open for the benefit of the Dutch. From the eighteenth century onwards certain young *samurai* were always to be found at this port endeavouring to place themselves in contact with the Dutch. The Shogun Tzunayoshi (1650-1709) pretended not to notice what was happening, although his Government was ostentatiously endeavouring to repress any kind of intercommunication between the natives and foreigners.

It appears that medicine was the first science which excited the interest of the youthful Japanese students. They at first managed to obtain from the Dutch some books, containing anatomical plates, which both interested and surprised them on account of the great difference which existed between the figures represented in these works and the fantastic theories invented by the Chinese doctors. At considerable risk, for the laws on the subject were extremely severe, they secretly experimented upon a corpse, in order to compare the results with the anatomical sketches they had obtained from Europe. This led to their procuring a Dutch treatise on anatomy, which, with great difficulty, they translated into Japanese, spending sometimes as much as a whole day upon a single phrase. Before the end of the eighteenth century several Dutch-Japanese dictionaries were compiled, and a good many European works were translated and published privately, and read with all that ardour which fear of persecution ever engenders.

Before the commencement of the present century these studies produced practical results, and the country was peppered with furnaces and windmills built after Dutch models. It led,

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also, to the introduction of several novel industries, which were evidently inspired by some occult European influence. However feeble these beginnings may have been, both European and modern Japanese writers attach a great importance to this early initiation of a certain number of able and learned men to at least one of the languages, and to some of the sciences of the West. It prepared the way for many ardent advocates of European civilization to influence the Japanese to accept European ideas. This was the impression conveyed to me at Tokio by that very able gentleman Mr. Fukuzawa, the editor of the most important newspaper published in Tokio, the *Jiji Shimpō*, or 'Times,' who is also founder and director of one of the largest free schools in Japan. He himself had studied Dutch between 1840 and 1850, when quite a young man, and showed me a book translated from the Dutch and published in Tokio in 1770. 'The days,' said he, 'of the old régime in Japan were counted when in 1854 the Americans forced my country to open her ports, and the Shogunate, which had become exceedingly unpopular, undermined on all sides, crumbled to the dust.'

The situation of Japan in the middle of the nineteenth century was therefore not unlike that of France on the eve of the Revolution; but, fortunately, above the honeycombed Government, doomed to fall at the first serious outbreak of popular displeasure, Japan possessed the Imperial dynasty, a power universally respected, all the more so because it was so completely exempt from interference in public affairs; towards it every heart turned in the hour of trouble, and the remarkable reforms were accepted in its name as proceeding from a Sovereign who ruled by Divine right. In 1853 an event occurred which more than any other tended to the overthrow of the Shogunate. An American squadron, consisting of four men-of-war, under the command of Commodore Perry, appeared in the Bay of Yedo with the object of presenting a letter from the President of the United States to the Shogun demanding the conclusion of a treaty of commerce and the opening of the ports. It was in vain that the Bakufu (the Government of Yedo) tried to induce the Commodore to proceed to Nagasaki and to employ the mediation of the Dutch and Chinese. Perry replied that he would only accord a few months for the delivery of the answer he demanded, and promised to return and fetch it in the following year. The

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Government of Yedo was taken by surprise, and feeling that it was impossible to resist the importunate and imperative strangers, and alarmed at the grave consequences which might result from the opening out of the country, addressed a circular to the daimios detailing the facts and asking their advice. Some of them suggested the opening of only one or two ports for a limited time, say three or four years, as an experiment, but the greater number—Prince Mito, chief of the house of Tokugawa, at their head—were of a contrary opinion, and counselled that no concession should be granted, and that the country should forthwith arm itself and prepare for resistance. Nevertheless, when Perry returned some time afterwards, a treaty was signed permitting the opening of the two ports of Shimoda and Hakodate, and, moreover, granting permission for the establishment of an American consulate (1854). This official took up his residence in 1857, just as France, England, and Russia had frightened the Shogun by a naval display into granting them like privileges, which were still further augmented by a new convention promulgated in 1858.

The prolonged isolation in which the feudal lords of Japan had hitherto lived had filled them with a horror of all things foreign, so that the concessions made by the Shogun very naturally produced an extraordinary fermentation among the military classes, who considered all these privileges bestowed upon the barbarians as so many outrages to the national dignity. The Imperial Court was not less scandalized. When the Mikado first heard of the arrival of so many Westerners on the sacred soil of Japan, he ordered public prayers to be said at Ise, the most holy temple in Japan, and presently a secret understanding was arrived at between the Court of Kioto and the clans in the south-west, who, although they were perfectly sincere in their detestation of the strangers, nevertheless thought this incident afforded an excellent chance for satisfying their hereditary rancour against the Tokugawa and a possibility of annihilating their power. When confronted by these dangers, the Shogun endeavoured to shirk his responsibility, and turned to the Mikado, asking him to confirm the treaties which he had himself concluded. A statesman of great energy and of progressive tendencies, Ii-Kammon-no-Kami, now determined to intimidate the Mikado and obtain from him at any cost the desired signature, which under such circumstances at another period would have been a mere formality. But this able man

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was assassinated in 1860 by the *ronin*, who, in accordance with Japanese usage, presently published a patriotic declaration justifying their crime. Needless to say, the Shogun, in his vain attempt to reconcile both parties, fell to the ground, like the man in the proverb who sought to seat himself between two stools. The audacity of his adversaries increased, and the Imperial Court and the daimios began to interfere without the slightest hesitation in the affairs of State. In 1862, against all precedent, the Prince of Satsuma, in going to Yedo, passed by Kioto, and undertook to escort thither a *kuge*, who was carrying Imperial despatches to the Shogun, and invited him to appear before the Emperor. The Bakufu now found itself so absolutely powerless that it was obliged to submit to all demands, including destitutions and reintegrations of dignitaries, together with the permission for the daimios to leave Yedo with their families; and thus was the first step taken towards the ultimate ruin of the time-honoured Shogunate.

For the first time in two hundred and thirty years a Shogun—a minor—went up to Kioto in March, 1863, preceded by the Regent. The Mikado left his palace, and, contrary to secular etiquette, went in solemn state to the temple of the God of War, where he bestowed the sword of honour upon the Shogun as the ensign of supreme command with which he was to expel the barbarians. The Shogun's second visit to Kioto in 1864, on the other hand, witnessed his complete abasement; for the Court no longer accepted his decrees, and refused him any further control over their finances. In a word, from being master he had now become servant. Amongst those who immediately surrounded the Emperor, there were still many who revolted at the idea of his being allowed to occupy himself with the government of the Empire, and their so doing gave the rebel clans in the south-west time to reorganize themselves. After a short attempt at revolt, they soon came to the conclusion that further dissensions would only play into the hands of their enemies, and from 1865 the majority of the *samourai* had joined a general conspiracy which it was hoped would result in the ruin of the already crumbling Shogunate. Still, the cry of 'Death to the barbarians!' was not so easily suppressed, and hatred of the foreigner remained for some time yet extremely fierce among the masses. The governing classes, however, who had been brought into contact with Europe, began to see that it was useless resisting

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its power, especially after Kagoshima, the capital of Satsuma, was bombarded in 1863 by a British squadron as a punishment for the murder of Mr. Richardson by the Prince's escort. The daimios and their councils no longer closed their eyes to the existing condition of affairs, and recognising the uselessness of resisting Powers which were armed with such formidable engines of war, they changed their policy as by magic, loaded the foreigners with honours, opened their ports to them, and even made preparations to place the Japanese army under the same régime as that of civilized nations. This conduct was not wholly disinterested, for they were shrewd enough to perceive the commercial advantages which might ultimately accrue to them as a reward for their liberality. The Court followed their example, and two years after having issued an order to 'sweep the strangers from the soil of Japan' as if they were so much dust, the Emperor ratified the treaties of 1865 at the demand of the Shogun, who had come to Kioto with 70,000 men to suppress the open revolt of the Prince of Choshu.

This struggle between the Tokugawa and a subordinate vassal was their last and supreme effort to regain power. Unfortunately for them, they were crushed in the attempt, and their military prestige was for ever destroyed. The Regent Hitotsubashi, who succeeded the young Shogun, who died on September 19, entertained no illusions as to the gravity of his position. He was by this time firmly convinced that it was absolutely necessary radically to modify the constitution of the country, and feeling certain that it would be useless any longer to resist so powerful and popular a wave of progress, he determined to associate himself with the new ideas, in the hope thereby of preserving some measure of his family's former influence. He therefore entreated the Emperor to summon a council of the principal daimios, who accordingly assembled at Kioto in 1868, with the result that they one and all advised the Emperor to allow the centralization of the Government to take place at once, as being absolutely necessary to the welfare of the country. The Prince of Tosa, one of the chiefs of the south, addressed a letter to the Shogun, in which he informed him of the results of the meeting, and that they had acknowledged the supremacy of the Emperor. Hitotsubashi, seeing that resistance was of no further avail, sent in his resignation, which was accepted, with the condition, however, that he should

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continue to direct public affairs until after the general assembly of all the daimios. The southern clans, fearing that the Tokugawa might still be able to recover their power, made a bold move, and attempted to seize the person of the Mikado. On January 3, 1868, the Imperial seal was stolen, and a decree issued handing over the guardianship of the palace to the *samourai* of Satsuma, Hizen and Tosa. On the following day the Shogunate was formally abolished. Hitotsubashi retired to Osaka with his army, where, trembling lest he might fall into some trap skilfully prepared by his enemies, and refusing to listen to any overtures, even the offer of a high position in the new Government, he marched with his men on Kioto; but the unfortunate Shogun was now treated as a mere rebel, and when he beheld the troops of the hostile clans carrying the embroidered standard of the Mikado, he realized that he was betrayed by his own people, and fled by sea to Yedo, where he surrendered unconditionally to Prince Arisugawa, commander of the 'Army of Punishment.' The princes of his family were the first to rally round the Emperor; others of his partisans struggled for a brief time with an adverse fate, but were finally overcome, and thus a revolution which began with the cry of 'Down with the foreigners!' and was provoked by the daimios and the *samourai*, the representatives of feudalism, against the authority of the Shogun, ended in the destruction of feudalism, and in the definite introduction into Japan of Western civilization.

Soon afterwards, when the Imperial Court began to better understand foreign manners and customs, the *kuges*, the more intelligent among them, from being antagonistic became their staunchest friends and supporters. Presently the mass of the people, following the lead of their superiors, enthusiastically accepted the new idea that Japan could no longer live isolated. Their rulers had the distinct merit of understanding that in order to become the equal of the Western nations, if only from the simple point of view of material progress, it would not suffice for Japan to borrow their cannons and their guns, or even their military training, an experiment which had signally failed with other Oriental Powers; but that if Western civilization was to be of the least good to Japan, it was absolutely necessary to accept it in all its branches, civil, industrial and commercial, as well as military. The promoters of the movement, the ministers and agents of the great lords, had no more interest in

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maintaining feudalism than had, after the Revolution, the inferior clergy and squires in the Government of France before 1789. The first step in the suppression of feudalism was the abolition of the privileges of the *samurai*, who might, had they been allowed to retain them, have become troublesome.

In 1876 the carrying of the two swords, their erstwhile distinguishing insignia, was prohibited. The stipends which they had previously received from their lords, and of which the State had possessed itself, were capitalized, and the territorial revenues of the daimios, which were at first compensated by annual pensions, were transformed in the same manner. These changes, which were undoubtedly beneficial to the bulk of the population, nevertheless brought about a great deal of misery, by throwing a number of people who had hitherto enjoyed all the privileges of fortune into humble circumstances. The peasantry benefited most by the new form of Government, and became, without having to pay anything, in a very short time owners of the land which they had hitherto only held as tenants, and, moreover, no longer obliged to pay a tribute to their feudal lords, but only a small tax to the Central Government. Needless to say, there was considerable resistance on the part of the two millions of people whom these new laws deprived of privileges which they had enjoyed for centuries, but these were easily and speedily suppressed. From 1869, in order further to mark the rupture between the old and the new order of things, the residence of the Emperor was transferred from Kioto to Yedo, now known as Tokio. In 1872 the first Japanese railway was opened between the new capital and Yokohama. The old-fashioned *samurai* were at first dreadfully scandalized when they saw the Emperor, against all precedent, driving about among the lower classes in an open carriage. But the invading wave was too strong for resistance, and presently a number of *samurai* of their own accord, especially in the capital, gave up the custom of wearing the two swords. Yet another flicker of the old spirit, however, reappeared in 1877, when the clan of Satsuma rose and endeavoured to oppose the introduction of so many innovations. This rebellion was suppressed by Marshal Saigo, who lost his life in the affair, leaving, however, behind him a name still universally venerated in Japan. In 1889 Viscount Mori, a Japanese statesman of very advanced opinions, was stabbed by a fanatic on the day of the proclamation of the new Consti-

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tution. At present no one in Japan, be he statesman or simple citizen, unless, indeed, he chance to be some fanatic or other under the influence of the Buddhist priests in some out-of-the-way district, dreams of disturbing the pleasant relations which exist between the native population and foreigners. After the repression of the rebellion in Satsuma the new Government was definitively consolidated, and the country fully launched on the road to complete Europeanization. In 1889 the Parliamentary system was introduced, and we shall presently see with what success. It is therefore not saying too much to assert, before we proceed further, that the wonderful revolution which has taken place in our day in Japan is not ephemeral, and that it has now gone too far to be in any danger of reaction. It is, moreover, quite in accord with the antecedents and the intellectual spirit of this remarkable people, and therefore likely not only to become permanent, but even progressive.

CHAPTER III

MODERN JAPAN

Japan the country of contrasts—The port and town of Nagasaki—The navigation of the Inland Sea—Junks and steam-boats—Yokohama—Its population and commerce—Tokio—The telephones and electric lights—The houses and the streets—The people and their costumes—Means of transport at Tokio—Jinrikishas and tramways.

THE moment the traveller enters the harbour of Nagasaki he finds himself surrounded by the most extraordinary contrasts. In the first place, the scenery is quite charming : the mountains are a delightful green and are thickly draped with foliage, from which peep out a number of pretty little wooden houses, whose windows are replaced by sliding paper-panels. The sea is dotted with rocky islands covered with those picturesque Japanese fir-trees whose outline is as varied as it is graceful. Here and there rise from the water curious little fishing-sheds, the delight of the amateur photographer, which add considerably to a landscape which looks for all the world like an animated picture off a Japanese screen. One can scarcely believe that it is all real, and certainly not that it was at one time the scene of a terrible tragedy : yet such it was, for from one of the neighbouring islands in 1638—yclept Pappenberg—several hundred Christians were cast into the sea. Presently we see rising in the background a tall chimney with its streaming cloud of smoke, and the noise of machinery in motion grating upon our ears reminds us somewhat unpleasantly that modern civilization has at length penetrated into Japan, and the better to emphasize this fact, our steamer is presently surrounded by a fleet of ugly coal-barges, and a sudden turn brings us face to face with the ships and flags of all nations—British, French, German, Russian, and American.

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On the other side of the bay, in the docks recently constructed by the Mitsubishi Company, workmen are busy building a 5,000-ton vessel. Not far distant, on the southern slope of the hill overlooking the town, is the European quarter, situated in the midst of delightful gardens. The elegant steeple of the Catholic church rises sharply from among the pine-trees, and contrasts favourably with the massive and very ugly building—an eyesore on the pretty scene—that disagreeably emphasizes the very bad taste of the American missionaries, as also the absolute tolerance which the Government of the Mikado accords to all denominations in a country where, not so very long ago, so great was its exclusiveness that even the shipwrecked were put to a cruel death. As I gazed upon this charming scene, I could not forbear picturing to myself how it must have looked fifty years ago when a solitary Dutch vessel landed its tiny cargo for the benefit of a few foreign merchants imprisoned in the artificial island of Deshima, the only spot where they were allowed to live, and even then subjected to many vexatious humiliations.

In forty-five years Nagasaki has become the chief coaling port on the Pacific, and as safe for Europeans—perhaps safer—than many a seaport in Europe itself. Steamers do not remain long at Nagasaki, where they only touch to coal, but passengers have time to land for a few hours and visit the town. Happily, the inhabitants have retained their national costumes, but the men have unfortunately adopted our very ugly headgear, and flourish in every variety of bowler and yachting hat. In the shops one soon perceives the march of civilization, for they are full of articles imported from all parts of the world, as well as others imitated from European models, improved upon, in the artistic sense, by the natives. You can buy books by all the leading authors almost as cheaply as in Paris or London, as well as oil-lamps, gas-stoves, photographs representing recent Japanese battles with the Chinese, looking-glasses (which were absolutely unknown in Japan until quite recently), and little terrestrial globes, the sight of which latter reminded me of an anecdote related by a missionary when I was in China. At the beginning of the Chino-Japanese War, the Viceroy of a certain province asked the Reverend Father to show him where Japan was located, and he had the pleasure of pointing out to His Excellency, for the first time in his life, the exact place whence came the warriors

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with whom his Government was then at war. The Japanese are very proud of their victory over their colossal neighbour, and have placed some of the cannon which they took from her in the principal Shinto temples in the city.

Twelve hours after leaving Nagasaki you pass into the great Inland Sea, or heart of Japan, to effect an entrance into which in 1863 required the combined efforts of the fleets of England, France, Holland, and the United States. Now every great steamer that trades in the Pacific is free to weigh anchor in this glorious harbour, which, however, is never open at night on account of the many dangers to navigation in the Strait of Shimonoseki, which, by the way, is only a mile wide. As we passed through it, I perceived quite close to the southern shore no less than six immense steamers, anchored off the port of Moji—rapidly becoming a rival to Nagasaki—up to which the trains bring coal from the mines situated some miles inland. On the summit of the long range of hills a number of huge cannon stationed at intervals testify that the coasts of Japan are by no means unguarded.

Everything has been done by the Japanese Government to facilitate navigation in this rather dangerous Inland Sea, which was so hermetically shut to foreigners a half-century ago. In 1895 there were over 149 light-houses, built either by the State or the local authorities, admirably placed at intervals along the coast of Japan, the majority, of course, being erected along the shores of the Inland Sea, which, it must be remembered, contains not less than 5,000 islands. These lighthouses are all the more necessary because, although the scenery of this magnificent expanse of water is very beautiful, the currents are exceedingly strong and dangerous, and the shoals, moreover, very numerous. An amazing number of little Japanese steamers of from 80 to 200 tons, and even less, constantly carry passengers to and fro between the various ports and towns on these innumerable islands. Mingling among these are still to be seen a few old Japanese junks, which, however picturesque, are not of much use in these go-ahead days, and are rapidly disappearing. Their shape is now only retained by a few fisher-boats. As a matter of fact, it is no longer legal to build vessels after the old Japanese model, excepting on a small scale, as in fishing or pleasure boats. Such a decree as this would, in any other country, have caused some unruly expression of public opinion ; but in Japan it was

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otherwise, and the people very reasonably accepted a change for the better in the time-honoured form of their sea-craft. After twenty-four hours, of which one or two were passed at Kobe, we left the Inland Sea behind, and almost immediately afterwards beheld for the first time the peak of the celebrated Fusi-yama volcano, rendered so famous by Japanese engravers. Twenty-eight hours after leaving Kobe we entered the harbour of Yokohama, which is within fifty minutes' rail of Tokio, the capital.

Yokohama was, before the enfranchising of the ports, a miserable little fishing village containing about a hundred houses. It was opened to foreign commerce in 1858 in the place of Shimoda, which was thought to be badly situated. It is a town of 170,000 inhabitants, having sprung up after the mushroom fashion hitherto deemed peculiar to America, and is the third largest port in the Far East, being alone surpassed by Hong-Kong and Shanghai; but its streets appear much less animated than those of the last-named ports. The Bund, the principal thoroughfare by the sea, always seems rather deserted. On the other hand, on the hill above, to the south of the concession, is the European quarter, which is full of delightful houses, surrounded by lovely gardens. There are about 1,800 foreigners of various nationalities, exclusive of Chinese, settled here, a good half being English. The port is very spacious and commodious, and the biggest ships ever built can anchor quite close up to the quay. The total value of the exports in 1896 was £6,169,600, the imports £7,280,400, making a total of £13,450,000, or about half the foreign commerce of Japan, which, during the same year, reached the very important figure of £28,500,000.* But this brand-new town is not particularly interesting, and the traveller will do well to hurry on to Tokio.

The capital of Japan is the largest town in Asia, and the seventh in the world. On December 31, 1895, it was reputed to contain 1,268,930 souls, and must by this time, owing to the rapid increase of its population, have attained 1,400,000. It is spread over an enormous space, much larger than that occupied by Paris. The reason why it covers such an amazing extent is that everybody lives in his own house, which is never more than one story high, and then, again, nearly every house has its little

* In 1899 (to December 25) 423,646,605 yen, or £42,364,660.—H. N.

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garden. Under these conditions, it is, therefore, not surprising that such an enormous population requires unlimited space in which to accommodate itself. Moreover, Tokio contains a great many open spaces, and, odd to relate, most of these are to be found in the centre of the town in the neighbourhood of the Imperial Palace. These 'building sites,' if one might so call them, were formerly occupied by the palaces of the great daimios, the majority of which were surrounded by bastions, supported on a cyclopean stone wall rising from a deep moat. When the daimios first received permission to leave Tokio, a few years before the downfall of the old Government, they retired to their castles in the provinces, and, at the abolition of the feudal system in 1872, their lands became, as we have seen, the property of the State. On the site of several of them immense public buildings have been erected after the European fashion, among which are the palaces of the various Ministries, and also the Parliament House ; but many other wide, open spaces are still waiting to be utilized, and, being weed-grown and disorderly, produce a distinctly dreary effect. The old ramparts, planted with pine-trees, which surrounded most of them, are still standing, and one, embracing the immense park of the Imperial Palace, is used as a public promenade. As you walk along it, and look towards the palace itself, it is difficult to believe that you are in Japan, everything is so very European, and on the other side the waste land contains a perfect forest of telegraph and telephone poles, which affirms, and very forcibly, too, that our civilization is distinctly the reverse of picturesque.

Telephones, telegraph, electric light, gas, petroleum lamps, etc., are now as plentifully used in Tokio as they are in any English or American town. It is most amusing to notice as you pass along the streets, when the paper screens which form the façade of most of the houses are removed, the artisans seated at their *tatamis*, working by the light of an Edison lamp. When they cannot afford electricity or gas, the Japanese use petroleum exclusively, but not without some considerable risk to the safety of a city entirely built of wood. Since a Japanese house contains next door to nothing in the way of furniture, and that even in the houses of the rich all valuable objects of art are usually kept in an iron safe, and only exposed on state occasions, a fire does not matter so much as it would in a London mansion or a Chicago 'sky-scraper.' A few

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cushions, coverlets, and household utensils, which are to be found in every house, are soon put outside the doors, so that the inhabitants have very little to fear, for their house is only one story high, and the whole façade consists of paper screens, which slide into one another when required. The only people who really have anything to fear from fire are the retail merchants, whose shops, of course, are well stocked. Fires are of very constant occurrence, and people are not at all surprised to wake up in the morning to hear that some hundred houses have been burnt down during the night.

The authorities at present avail themselves of fires in order to widen the streets and improve their sanitary condition. They are now as a rule much straighter and wider than any to be found in most other Oriental cities, and even, for the matter of that, in the towns of Southern Europe, and although they have no side-walks, they are much cleaner than any you will find in China or Siberia, or, indeed, in most cities of the United States. Possibly on account of the immense size of the city, they are nothing like so animated as the streets of Peking or Tien-tsin, and are much less picturesque than one might have been led to expect, for the Japanese, both men and women, after they have reached their tenth or twelfth year dress very plainly in neutral colours, blue, gray and brown prevailing. The women, however, enliven the scene by their bright-hued waistbands and huge bows. As to the children, especially on holidays, they wear the most vivid colours. Sometimes you can trace upon their tiny persons an entire landscape, and at others enormous bunches of flowers dashed upon a background of scarlet China crape, which decorate their exceedingly small figures. Their heads are generally close-shaven when they are infants, but as they grow older the dignity of age is marked by that funny zone of stiff black hair which adds so much to the comical appearance of a Japanese doll. Another peculiarity about these youngsters is that a smaller one generally hangs on to the back of another so tightly as to suggest a big barnacle. It is indeed amusing to watch a little lady of between five and six years of age carrying her still smaller brother on her back literally from morning to night, never appearing in the least degree incommoded by what to children of other nationalities would be a most uncomfortable position. The little boy accommodates himself to all the various movements his sister may make. If she tumbles, he

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tumbles, and if she gets up, up gets he, and it would really appear as if the younger child formed an integral part of the elder's body. European children who are brought up in Japan fall into this singular habit quite as naturally as the Japanese, who can fall to sleep in a position which would, one imagine, have kept awake one of the famous Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

European costume has undoubtedly made some inroad throughout Japan, but fortunately not to the extent originally anticipated. Japanese ladies, who first adopted European fashions with enthusiasm, at present have nearly returned to the delightful way of dressing invented by their ancestresses, so that during the three months I spent in Japan I only once saw a Japanese lady dressed *à la Parisienne*. The European costume is now only to be seen at Court on state occasions, where, it should be observed, the old Japanese Court dress was not only very ugly and extremely heavy, but most uncomfortable. A few years ago an order was given that all the officials, little and great, should wear, when on duty, frock-coats and straight trousers, but this edict is no longer in force. Nevertheless, it has become the fashion for Japanese officials of rank to attend their offices in European costume, but here again there are already exceptions. English hats of all sorts and shapes, Tyrolese, bowler, sailor hats, and German caps, are universally worn by men in every class. Some young gentlemen, with pretensions to fashion, are adopting the tailor-made garments of Bond Street and the Rue de la Paix, and although this is regrettable from the æsthetic point of view, it must be conceded that our dress is much better adapted for the exigencies of our modern life than the loose, long-sleeved garments of the Japanese.

The *kago*, or palanquin, has absolutely disappeared from Tokio, and is now only to be found in the mountain districts, its place having been taken by the jinrikisha. It is now so well known in Europe, thanks to Japanese exhibitions, that all I need say is that it is a very small carriage supported by two very tall wheels, and pulled along by a runner. The jinrikisha is not, as many imagine, of Japanese origin, but due to the inventive genius of a foreigner, who made a fortune out of his invention. It is now used throughout the whole of the Far East; but Japan remains the land of its predilection, mainly on account of the extraordinary swiftness and skill of the native runners, who are unsurpassed in this respect in any

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other part of the East. There are at the present moment about 200,000 of these quaint vehicles in various parts of the Empire, of which about 40,000 are in Tokio. As a rule they can only seat one person, but a few are built to convey two passengers, exclusively Japanese ; for the jinrikisha is not yet built that would accommodate a couple of Europeans, even ladies. The lowest fare is $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. ; by the hour, 5d. ; and for the half-day, 1s. 3d. These are the prices exacted from Europeans, but the Japanese pay considerably less.

Independently of the jinrikisha, Tokio possesses a few omnibuses, and a line of tramways uniting the two stations of Shimbashi, the terminus of the Western, and Uyeno, that of the Northern Railway. The extreme length of this tramway is nine miles, and the fare is $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. all the way. The tramcars are driven by horses, and the number of seats is not limited, people being allowed to stand up in the middle as in the United States. In 1895 the company conveyed fifteen million and a half passengers, paying a return of thirty-five per cent. on a capital of about £45,000. An electric tramway is now under consideration. One improvement Tokio certainly stands in need of, and that regards its lighting. Here and there you may come across an electric lamp or so ; but the principal street illumination invariably proceeds from those big Chinese lanterns, lighted by petroleum lamps, which hang outside the shops, which, fortunately, remain open until quite late ; but when the shutters are up in most of the wooden houses one passes by, the darkness is quite Egyptian, unless, indeed, it happens to be a moonlight night. Doubtless, in the course of a very little time, Tokio will be as well lighted as any other highly-civilized city.

CHAPTER IV

JAPANESE INDUSTRY

Japan the Great Britain of the Far East—Osaka, the centre of Japanese industry—Great and small industries—Increase of certain industries hitherto unknown in Japan : glass and match manufactories, breweries, etc.—Employment of children—Scale of wages—Length of labour hours—Cotton-spinning—The larger industries—Recruiting of workmen and women from the rural districts—Abuses denounced by the press—Increase of wages throughout Japan.

NOTHING delights the Japanese more than to hear their Empire compared to Great Britain, and when we come to think of it there is a certain analogy between the Archipelago of the Rising Sun in the Far East and the British Isles in the West ; but the Japanese hope that this resemblance will not end in a mere geographical comparison, but extend to their maritime, commercial and industrial development. To their credit, be it said, they are really working very hard to attain their ideal. One has only to visit Osaka, the Manchester of the Mikado's Empire, to realize the amazing progress made by the Japanese in the last quarter of the century. This city, which has a population of about half a million souls, is situated midway between Kioto and Kobe, about thirty miles distant, which respectively contain 340,000 and 150,000 inhabitants. About six and a half miles further on is yet another industrial centre, Sakai, with a population of 50,000. This region, which slopes gradually to the Inland Sea, may be described as the heart of Japan, being its main centre of commercial, agricultural and industrial activity, and it is the chief tea-market of the Empire. It was also until 1869 near the political centre ; for Kioto was from the end of the eighth century the capital of the Mikados, who removed their Court thither from Nara, where they had previously resided for several centuries.

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Industries on a large scale have only been recently introduced into Japan, among the earliest being that of cotton-spinning, established in Osaka in 1882. Before the arrival of the Europeans, and even up to 1880, nearly all the minor trade of the country was divided up into a number of small workshops scattered all over the country. A few large silk manufactories existed, however, in the more important towns, and at Kioto there were some fairly important paper factories, and *saké*-distilleries (wine made from rice); but these were not numerous, and only engaged a very few hands. The official statistics for 1894 disclose the existence of 4,732 families manufacturing the various ceramic products for which Japan is famous, employing about 23,726 people; 4,407 families, giving employment to 14,092 artisans, engaged in the manufacture of lacquerware; 81,652 matting and straw-plaiting factories; and lastly 600,444 families working 820,585 looms. From this we see that what might be termed the minor industries of the country are very numerously represented. In these small and independent workshops are produced all those numerous Japanese articles that enjoy a European popularity which they are not likely to lose for a very long time to come, Japan having a monopoly in the production of an infinite number of toys, articles of furniture, paper fans, umbrellas, boxes, screens, and knick-knacks of every description; and it is fortunate it is so, on account of the density of the rural population, and the exceeding smallness of the farms, which are easily cultivated, leaving their proprietors a great deal of leisure on their hands, which they wisely employ in making those countless pretty things that in Europe go by the name of 'Japanese fancy goods.' These small workshops now carry on nearly all the art industries of the country, but no Japanese city is now without its tall chimneys, rising quite as conspicuously and unpicturesquely in their suburbs as they do in Europe.

Northward of the cyclopean stone ramparts of the old castle of Osaka stands the enormous Mint, one of the finest establishments of the sort in the world, to the east of which is the Arsenal, where the Japanese turn out all the cannon and guns necessary for the use of their army. At night the horizon is crimson with the ruddy glow of the cotton-mills and other numerous factories. Most of these industries have only been lately introduced into the country, and the fathers of many of those who are engaged in them had no idea even

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of their existence. The Japanese, for instance, until quite recently, had no conception of the art of glass-blowing. To-day there are several very important glass factories doing a first-class trade at Osaka, glass being now much needed on account of the prevailing use of petroleum lamps, and many people are beginning to use glass in place of the paper screens which have hitherto served the Japanese as windows. Breweries have been established in various parts of the country, and the principal at Osaka produces admirable beer, largely exported, even as far as Vladivostok and Singapore. Brushes of every description, too, are now manufactured in Japan, and exported in great quantities to the United States. I had the pleasure of inspecting one of these brush manufactories at Osaka, which employed 300 men, women and children on the premises, and 900 others in its various branches in the suburbs. I experienced some little difficulty at first in gaining admittance on account of my nationality, and I had even to take an oath that I would not divulge any of the secrets of the trade. This precaution was due to some fear that I might possibly introduce their economical system into France, and thereby do them considerable mischief in the way of competition. A curious fact connected with this particular trade of brush-making is, that the necessary pigs' bristles and bone have to be imported, for the excellent reason that St. Anthony's pet animal is practically non-existent in any part of the Empire, so that the Japanese confine themselves to carving the handles for the infinite number of brushes which they manufacture, and in putting the bristles into the variety of objects that require them. Osaka likewise contains a number of iron-foundries and ship-yards, in which nearly all the small steamers which ply between the islands are constructed. Unfortunately the harbour of Osaka is a very bad one, and, indeed, might almost be described as non-existent, the entrance to the river being very sandy, and the exit seaward hopelessly narrow and exposed to east winds. For this reason the majority of the goods manufactured at Osaka are exported *viâ* Kobe, where nearly all the great English and American steamers touch, and which is an admirable port. The formation of a large harbour at Osaka was begun in 1899, at a cost of something like £2,000,000, assured by a loan of £1,700,000, issued by the town, in addition to a considerable subvention from the State. A new industry has recently been introduced at Osaka, that of

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jute carpet-making, which is likely to become very important, an enormous number of very cheap and very pretty carpets having already been exported to the United States and still more recently to England, where, on account of their excellent patterns, durability and extreme cheapness, they have suddenly become extremely popular. The present Exhibition at Paris will no doubt introduce them into France.

The Japanese copper and tin industries have only recently been created, and at present do not employ more than eighty hands. The silk industries are entirely concentrated at Kioto. Mats and other straw goods, which form a very important item of Japanese export, are exclusively made in and about the same city. Undoubtedly the two most important of the modern Japanese industries are cotton-spinning and match-making. In 1889, 10,165,000 gross of matches, costing £184,000, were produced. In 1894, the figures stood at 18,721,000 gross, valued at £406,800, since when this industry has gone on increasing by leaps and bounds. Matches, as may well be imagined, are very cheap throughout the country, and you can buy two boxes containing each about sixty for five rin, or a half-sen, *i.e.*, half a farthing.

Nothing can be more interesting than a visit to one of these great match factories, which exclusively employ women and children, the latter being sometimes under six years of age. Wages, when compared with those of Europe, are very trifling, the highest average being 15 sen, or about $3\frac{3}{4}$ d., per diem. Some of the girls get a little more for pasting on the labels, which requires considerable skill, and the women who put the matches in the boxes are paid $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. Very clever work-women, who by the sheer delicacy of their touch are able to tell to a match, without the trouble of counting them, how many go to a box, are paid 7d. Some objection has been made to the employment of so many infants, but their mothers do not seem to object, for in the first place the children add a farthing or so to the general fund, and in the second they are able to keep them about them, which no doubt saves them much anxiety. Very few men are engaged in these match manufactories. The match-boxes are nearly all made by the work-people at home in their off-hours, and also in certain workshops set apart for their manufacture. Japanese matches are exported in great quantities to Hong Kong, China and India.

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The cotton looms are located in stone buildings erected on Manchester models, and employ many thousands of hands. The following Custom-house statistics will give an excellent idea of the progress of this industry :

			Spun Cotton.	
			Exportation from Japan.	Importation into Japan.
			Tons.	Tons.
1894	...	...	64,071	9,350
1895	...	...	84,739	8,661
1896	...	...	99,108	11,810
1897	(10 months)		117,710	7,185

From the above it will be remarked that Japan, in a relatively very short time, from being almost exclusively an importer of cotton goods, now exports them to foreign markets, and with good results. The Custom-house declared in 1898 £1,109,600 worth of cotton, or 20,269 tons of exports, and £734,400, or 7,185 tons of imports. The statistics of the Japanese Cotton Spinners' Union record the following figures :

	Mills.	No. of Looms.	Workmen.	Work-women.	Production of Spun Cotton.
					Tons.
31 Dec., 1890	30	227,895	4,089	10,330	18,798
" 1895	47	580,945	9,650	31,140	68,106
" 1897	61	839,387	13,447	43,367	97,435
31 Oct., 1898	61	1,233,661	13,447	43,367	97,829

Nearly half of this cotton is manufactured at Osaka, the rest at Kobe, and at Okayama, on the Inland Sea, to the west, and at Yokkaichi, Nagoya and Tokio, to the east. The conclusion of the late Chinese War gave a great impulse to the cotton industries in Japan, and necessitated the construction of new and much larger establishments, and the enlargement of those already in existence, so that it is calculated that before long over a million and a half looms will be in activity in various parts of the country. These very important industries, it must be remembered, are not subsidized by foreign capital, or under the direction of foreigners; they are purely

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and absolutely Japanese ; up to the present, however, nearly all the plant has been imported from England and America.

Until 1897 employers of labour had a good deal of trouble in obtaining workmen. The townspeople, being engaged in a great many small industries of their own, were not willing to abandon them for work which was not likely to prove as remunerative as their own ; in consequence of this the country districts had to be ransacked for hands, and nearly all the girls employed in the factories of Osaka are the daughters of small farmers. They are lodged and boarded by the various companies in buildings erected expressly for the purpose, a percentage being deducted from their wages for their keep. Certain abuses having arisen in their management, a leading local newspaper, published in English, but really owned and edited by Japanese, in 1897 called attention to the same in a series of articles, violently attacking the working organization of the Osaka cotton-mills. The lodgings of the workwomen were, it was stated, exceedingly unhealthy ; and as to the morals of the women employed, the less said about them the better. Then, again, the agents who engaged these young women were accused of doing so under false promises, and it was said they even went so far as to intercept their correspondence with their homes. The editor furthermore condemned in the severest terms the employment of extremely young children.

These articles attracted a great deal of attention, and contained doubtless a certain amount of truth, not unmingled, however, with considerable exaggeration. The Japanese employers of labour are, it should be remarked, after all in very much the same position in which our own were some fifty or sixty years ago. As to the moral tone of the workgirls, it is doubtless neither better nor worse than it is in the great manufacturing centres of Europe and America. At Moscow a manufacturer informed me that the morals of his workgirls were very bad, and at Shanghai another gentleman related to me things on the same subject best left unpublished. The working hours are not longer in Japan than they were in Europe thirty or forty years ago. They never exceed twelve hours a day, from which half an hour must be deducted for the mid-day meal. Nevertheless, it is excessive, especially when we remember that the week's work is divided into two parts, one half the hands working all night and the other all day, so that

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the looms are never at rest. Then they have only two off-days in the month, on the first and the fifteenth; and there are only four special holidays in the year, the three first days in the New Year, and the Emperor's birthday. Even the first and the fifteenth are not observed if there is a press of work. If these hours appear too long, it must not be forgotten that the Japanese workman, like his brother worker in the South of Europe, does not labour with the intensity that distinguishes the Englishman or the American. As to the employment of women, they are only engaged in the match factories, and their work is of the lightest.

Nevertheless, attention in Japan is being directed towards these two very important questions, which will, doubtless, sooner or later, receive proper attention and be modified. Wages are already rising, as the workpeople begin to understand their worth and their own interests, and to know how to protect them. A danger to which the Japanese industries are exposed is undoubtedly due to a diminution of capital, the result of over-production after the late war, which brought about much the same phase that occurred in the commercial history of Germany after the Franco-German War. However, the financial crisis of 1898 and the competition recently created at Shanghai have created a certain degree of anxiety concerning the immediate future of Japanese industry; but, on the other hand, the magnificent results obtained in such a surprisingly short time, and the courageous manner in which this industrious people have overcome the many difficulties which beset them in the earlier stages of their career, must not be forgotten.

CHAPTER V

RURAL JAPAN

Predominance of agriculture in the economic existence of Japan—Density of the rustic population in the plains and lower valleys—Importance of the Japanese fisheries with respect to the food supply of the people—Principal crops: rice, tea and mulberry trees—Absence of domestic animals—Returns of Japanese agriculture—Small holdings—Japanese peasantry, their vegetarian or ichthyophagian diet—Their dwellings—Position of women—Their extreme cleanliness, politeness and good nature—Cost of living—Amelioration of peasant life in Japan after the Restoration—Spread of Western civilization and instruction among them.

NOTWITHSTANDING the rapid industrial development which has recently taken place in Japan, the greater proportion of the population is still essentially rural, and derives, if not all, at least the greater part of its means of subsistence from the soil. Petty industries, however, abound and materially assist this hard-working people to add to their very small incomes. Along the indented coasts of the islands, and on the shores of the Inland Sea, innumerable little villages will be found, whose inhabitants depend entirely for their subsistence upon the fisheries, but notwithstanding their importance, Japan may be described as an essentially agricultural country. It is, also, the cultivation of the soil which supplies the raw material of the silk, still one of the staple export industries, and also of another very important article of exportation, tea. On a total export in 1896 of £11,650,000 worth of Japanese products, tea represented £637,200, rice £795,100, raw silk cocoons and silk-ravel £3,166,600. If we add to these figures about £4,700,000 worth of miscellaneous products, or 14 per cent., and add also about £1,200,000, or 40 per cent., of raw or unprepared produce, we shall find that the aggregate value of agricultural products of

all kinds reaches the respectable figure of £5,950,000, more than half that of the total export. Notwithstanding their importance, the area devoted to the culture of the tea-plant and the mulberry-tree is relatively small as compared with that devoted to rice, which is the staple article of food of the whole of the Far East. The extensive culture of this latter accounts for the peculiarity often noticed in Japanese landscapes, that you never see any of those gentle hill-slopes which are so familiar in France. The hills rise abruptly from the stagnant waters, and seem cut into three or four broad step-like terraces, possibly the result of the action of the water which inundates the rice-fields. When I was in Japan, in the autumn, the rice harvest was just over, and the country would have looked very dismal on account of the drab colour of the muddy soil, divided up like a chess-board into regular squares, from which the rice had been recently cut, and now covered by a thin layer of dry weeds, had it not been for the peculiarly elegant shapes of surrounding heights which are shaded by those delightful firs so familiar to us in old Japanese prints. The lace-like curtains of bamboo clustering here and there added also to the variety and charm of the scene, which was further enhanced by the numerous cryptomerias, whose superb foliage contrasted vividly with the brown and the red of the maples that are invariably planted around the charming little temples dotted about in all directions. In the hilly districts the beauty of the trees breaks the monotony of the rice-fields and of the reclaimed wastelands, but in the plains and valleys there is not one to be seen, every inch of land being most carefully cultivated.

The rural population of Japan is marvellously dense, incomparably more so than in any part of Europe. On an area but little greater than that of Great Britain and Ireland, Japan contains 42,270,620 inhabitants, that is to say, 284 souls per square mile, including the large southern island of Yezo, which is very sparsely peopled. Not taking this very extensive island into account, it will be safe to state that the population of Japan is twice as dense as that of France, and only equalled by that of Belgium, an absolutely industrial country, whereas at least 80 per cent. of the Japanese live in the country. Certain provinces, Shiko and Sitama, for instance, to the north-east of Tokio, respectively boast of 604 and 709 to the square mile, although the capital cities of these two provinces contain respectively only 26,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. The island of

Shikoku and the province of Kagawa, on the other hand, which possesses only one large town, Takamatsu, with 34,000 inhabitants, has a population that reaches the phenomenal figure of 998 souls to every square mile. In only thirty-six out of forty-six Japanese provinces, exclusive of Yezo, are there less than 250 inhabitants to the square mile, and in only four, three of which are at the extreme north and one at the south, is the population less crowded than in most parts of France. The following statistical table shows the population, with its relative density :

				Square miles.	Population.	Density per square mile.
Nippon, Northern	...	...	...	30,556	6,455,287	191
„ Central	...	...	...	37,028	16,368,995	442
„ Western	...	...	...	20,922	9,523,168	453
Island of Shikoku	...	...	...	7,113	2,929,639	412
„ Kiu-Siu	...	...	...	17,037	6,524,024	384
Hokkaido, or Yezo	...	...	...	36,734	469,507	13
				149,390	42,270,620	316
Formosa	...	...	...	8,995	2,041,809	228
				158,385	44,312,429	272

Even more remarkable than the population is the small area of cultivated land required to support such an immense number of people. Japan is an extremely mountainous country, and although the plains and valleys, especially in the east and south, are admirably cultivated, and the rice-fields occasionally cover hills that slope so close to the sea as not to allow of the existence of even a small fringe of cultivable land, the mountain ranges in the interior are still covered with forests, and even the northern part of the great island, where the land is excellent, is quite uncultivated. According to recent statistics, about one-fifth of the total surface of the country has been reclaimed and subdivided into a remarkable number of small farms and tenements. The forest lands, on the other hand, cover 88,632 square miles, of which 28,544 square miles belong to private owners, 51,834 square miles to the State or to the various provinces, and 8,254 square miles are Crown lands. The remainder of the island is occupied by moors, uncultivated tracts of land, ex-

tremely extensive in Yezo, where the forests are of vast extent, and where only 1,269 square miles of land repay cultivation. If we leave aside the northern island, and only take into consideration the land occupied by 99 per cent. of the Japanese population, we discover that, exclusive of 67,571 square miles of forest land, only 21,234 square miles provide food for 42,000,000 people, whereas in France there are about 56,917 square miles devoted to cereals alone, and if we add potatoes, vineyards and other edibles, we arrive at a total of 75,889 square miles for a population much inferior to that of Japan; moreover, France imports provisions very largely from other countries.

In England and in France, as in most other European countries, very extensive and superior pasture lands are set aside for the forage of domestic animals intended for food. In Japan there is nothing of the sort. On the high-roads you will meet peasants dragging their own carts and waggons, and if you travel by any other means than the railway, it will be in a jinrikisha hurried along by human runners, or in a palanquin carried on men's shoulders, rarely, if ever, in a carriage or on horseback. Sheep and goats are absolutely unknown in the Empire, but I am assured there are a few pigs, although I never saw any. A European who had lived many years in Japan assured me he had travelled for twelve hours by rail without seeing a bullock or a cow; in the west, however, I myself have often met with cattle. The scarcity of animals is one of the peculiarities of Japan which most surprises the traveller. Statistics confirm this impression, for they give only a return of 1,097,000 head of cattle and 1,477,000 horses.

Doubtless this singularity may be attributed to the predominance of the Buddhist religion, which prohibits the eating of flesh, notwithstanding which the Japanese are not above relishing a fowl, although poultry is nothing like as abundant as it is in our villages. The very great quantity of fish eaten doubtless accounts for this enormous population being able to exist in so mountainous a country on such an abstemious diet. The various fishing industries for 1894 returned produce valued at £2,740,000. We have already mentioned the countless fishing villages which send out a fleet of not less than 600,000 of those graceful one-sailed junks that sometimes seriously impede the progress of the numerous steamers in the Inland Sea. The secondary and very rocky

island of Awaju does not contain a single town, but nevertheless can boast of a population of 198,000 inhabitants, spread over an area of only 220 square miles, subsisting entirely on its fishing industries.

The importance of the fisheries does not prevent Japanese agriculture from taking a foremost position, and it must be admitted that farming must have reached a high degree of perfection if the limited space allotted to it can support such a dense population, a fact all the more remarkable when we remember that Japan imports very few articles of food. It is true that in many places there are two crops yearly, although rice has only two harvests in the southern island of Shokoku ; in many other places, in November, as soon as this has been gathered, the earth is manured again and sown with barley, or *daikon*, a kind of monster turnip. The following statistics of 1895, which give the extent of cultivated land and the nature of the various products, will serve to illustrate how relatively great these are when compared with the area of land in cultivation.

	Area in Acres.	Produce.
Rice	6,821,694	195,612,321 bshls.
Barley	1,600,632	33,830,173 „
Rye	1,649,390	34,377,074 „
Wheat... ..	1,096,257	19,470,855 „
Peas and azuki ...	1,318,779	17,701,808 „
Millet	848,282	18,633,157 „
Buckwheat	422,928	5,891,613 „
Sweet potatoes ...	586,478	1,865,709 cwts.
Potatoes	56,727	18,598,076 „
Colza... ..	374,072	4,932,246 bshls.
Cotton	148,649	471,978 cwts.
Hemp... ..	51,431	102,967 „
Indigo	114,999	579,298 „
Tobacco	88,185	279,870 „
Mulberry-trees ...	675,972	279,870 „
Tea	123,404	635,979 „

The absence of domestic animals obliges the Japanese to have recourse to novel methods of manuring the land. The rice-fields are strewn with green grass, freshly cut in openings in the forests and on the mountain sides, which, when covered with muddy water, speedily decomposes ; to this lime is some-

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times added. Excrements of all kinds are also largely employed in all fields except those devoted to the cultivation of rice, and along the coast line fish manure is much used.

Everywhere, excepting in Yezo, the cultivation of rice preponderates, especially in the northern part of the principal island, mainly because the climate is elsewhere too cold to allow of any other crop being sown during the winter and spring. Barley and wheat are grown mainly in the centre of the great island of Nippon, rye in the western parts of the same island, and also in the two southern islands of Shikoku and Kiu-siu, the last-named of which produces sweet potatoes in abundance. These were originally imported from Java to Satsuma, and are still called *Satsuma-imô*, or Satsuma potatoes. Tobacco, which was introduced by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, and which is universally used all over the islands, being one of the few customs the Japanese have retained from their first contact with Europeans, is cultivated everywhere, except, perhaps, in the north. The mulberry-tree grows exclusively in the mountainous regions of the centre, and only in very small quantities in the north. Tea will be met with, on the other hand, only in the plains, and at the foot of the lower ranges of hills. From the windows of the train which passes from Tokio to Kioto, and principally in the environs of this last-named town, as also of Osaka and Nara, one sees extensive tea-plantations lifting their deep, green foliage from the rice-fields.

As may well be imagined, owing to the smallness of his tenement, the Japanese peasant is by no means rich, and has to live on very little. In the plains he subsists mainly on rice boiled in water, precisely as do the workpeople in the towns, a little fish seasoned with *soy*, or Japanese sauce, flavours this very simple menu, which also includes a few eggs, and occasionally a chicken, a little game, or a wild duck. In the mountains, where the people are very poor, and rice is considered a luxury, barley and millet are sometimes substituted. The fisher-folk replace this almost exclusively vegetarian diet by the produce of their work. Even among well-off people in the towns the principal dish at dinner consists of boiled rice. During meals the usual drink is hot *saké*, which the guests offer each other in little cups with a good deal of polite ceremony. This very weak form of brandy is distilled from

rice, and about 150,000,000 gallons of it are consumed annually. The other great Japanese drink is green tea.

The Japanese peasantry usually live in small villages, separated from each other only by a few hundred yards. Sometimes, however, their houses are built in little groups of four or five, but it is extremely rare to find a peasant's cottage quite isolated. Nothing can exceed the simplicity of the construction of these habitations, which only differ from those of the townspeople by their lofty and heavy thatched roofs, which usually contain a granary, and are supported by very stout wooden pillars, rising from a heap of stones placed on the bare ground, without any attempt at a foundation. Those walls only which support the gable are solidly built with clay kept together by a bamboo lattice. The two principal façades stand back about a yard inside the pillars, and consist of paper screens which slide backwards and forwards. At night, or in stormy weather, these screens are replaced by wooden shutters. The whole front is thrown wide open when the weather is fine or there is a ray of sunshine, so that passers-by may have a full view of the interior. It is this curious fashion of living in public which most strikes the traveller who arrives in Japan from China, where you cannot even see what is going on in the outer courtyard, and is one of the chief characteristics that differentiate the Japanese from all other Orientals. Another very striking feature is the scrupulous cleanliness which reigns in these dwellings, whose only furniture are *tatamis*, or thick straw mats, which cover the floor of the whole house, excepting a space immediately opposite the door where visitors are expected to leave their boots and slippers.

The total absence of furniture, added to an equal lack of heating apparatus and to the non-existence of any means of shutting out cold and draughts, at first gives one an impression of extreme discomfort, but it must not be forgotten that when the Japanese adopted Chinese civilization they rejected three things: chairs, coverlets, and stoves. The Imperial palaces at Kyoto would make one of our humblest cottages, so far as furniture is concerned, appear quite luxurious. At Hirashima, a town of 100,000 inhabitants, the principal hotel is kept by a Japanese, and although lighted by electricity and possessing a telephone, the guests are expected to sit upon the floor, and only to warm the tips of their fingers at the two or three little scraps of burning embers in the *hibachi*, and in the morning, although

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it may be freezing, they have to perform their toilet in the open courtyard. When I was in this city I visited the house occupied by the Emperor during the Chinese War, and was shown his study, which contained merely an arm-chair, a few other chairs, and by way of stove only a *hibachi*, of exquisite workmanship, it is true—black lacquer worked over with gold.

The emptiness of a Japanese peasant's home is, therefore, no sign of extreme poverty, and although we may describe him as poor, as his capital is extremely small, there is no reason to describe him as destitute. In summer he is dressed as lightly as possible, and in winter as warmly, always in deep blue, in contrast to the light blue affected by the Chinese. The men wear a pair of trousers, or rather a tight-fitting pair of drawers that reach to the ankles, and an ample vest with pagoda sleeves. The women, on the other hand, wear one or two skirts reaching half-way down their legs, and gaiters or stockings without feet, the whole made of cotton or dark blue linen and joining the *tabi*, or little shoe, which ascends above the ankle.

Japanese women enjoy greater freedom than any other women outside Europe. They may come and go wherever and whenever they like, and chatter with whom they choose. Whereas in China you never see a woman in a tavern, in Japan you very frequently see only women. At an inn you are always received by the wife of your host and by a whole troop of young girls, who serve you, and keep you company. The women, when they have finished their household duties, which are very slight, share with the men the labour in the fields; and I remember seeing in the neighbourhood of Kioto a woman with a child on her back helping her husband to drag a waggon along. One is astonished to perceive with what persistent good-humour these small but very hardy people perform their very heavy work. In the midst of the trying labours of the rice-fields, with their feet benumbed by the cold mud during the harvest, which is gathered in November, they are invariably gay and happy. Doubtless that which contributes most to their cheerfulness is the fact that they are far ahead of the corresponding class in any other country in the matter of artistic instinct. There are very few of them but preserve some curiosity in bronze or lacquer, which has been handed down by ancestors, and which, of all

the scanty heirlooms, is the one thing most valued. They are, moreover, passionately fond of nature.

Every season of the year has its flowers, wild or cultivated, from the plum-trees in February to the deep, red-leaved maples in November, and every district has some particular spot celebrated for the beauty and abundance of this or that flower. Thither the whole neighbourhood goes in gay crowds to enjoy and admire them. In that season of the year when they have less to do, the peasants, who are indefatigable walkers, under the pretext of a pilgrimage, go incredible distances to visit some beautiful site, or a famous temple, usually surrounded by magnificent trees. Then, again, their domestic industries supply them with a great deal of light work, which tends to render their existence less monotonous than it otherwise might be. In order to give my readers an idea of the cost of living in Japan, I copy from the *Japan Times* the following table of the expenses of the family of a schoolmaster in the province of Rikuzen, in the north of the principal island.

EXPENSES FOR THREE PERSONS—HUSBAND, WIFE, AND INFANT OF FROM SIX TO SEVEN YEARS OF AGE.

	£	s.	d.
3 to (1 to = 4 gallons) 3rd quality rice	0	9	2
Vegetables and fish	0	3	0
House linen	0	3	0
Rent of house	0	1	7½
Lighting and heating	0	1	6
3 sho (1 sho = ⅔ gallon) 2nd quality soy (sauce) ...	0	0	10½
Tea	0	0	7
Writing materials	0	0	7
Education of child... ..	0	0	5
Baths every three days	0	0	5
Taxes	0	0	3½
Footgear	0	0	3½
Extras	0	0	11
Total	1	2	8

Or, in other words, about £1 3s. for the month. To this must be added £1 10s. a year for clothing, making a total of £15 2s. for the year. These figures were compiled in 1897, when the price of provisions had considerably increased. It must, however, be stated that they exceeded the salary of the unfortunate teacher, which has not been raised, and is only £1 a month.

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The peasantry have certainly benefited by the abolition of the old form of government, and Western civilization is even now commencing to penetrate among them. They light their dwellings with petroleum, and, although their notions of the value of time are exceedingly simple, nearly all of them possess a watch or a clock. Most have adopted European caps or hats, and none of the men shave their heads as they did in olden times; moreover, they never express the least opposition to the encroachments of modern civilization, but, on the contrary, invariably display curiosity and a great desire to try experiments. Public education is theoretically obligatory, and about 80 per cent. of the boys and 40 per cent. of the girls attend schools, where they are taught to read and to write about 100 Chinese characters, as well as the two syllabic Japanese alphabets, in addition to one or two other general things. The schoolmasters, having been too hastily recruited, may have been educated too much on the old-fashioned Chinese lines; but, nevertheless, modern ideas are making headway, and in the course of time will undoubtedly carry the field.

The Japanese people, even in the country, are definitely on the road to progress. It would be unwise to change everything from the night to the morning as by the touch of a magician's wand, but undoubtedly the first impulse has been given, and has met with no resistance. From the agricultural point of view, there can be no question that the Japanese have much to learn, not so much with respect to those products which they already cultivate, but to the introduction of others besides the all-prevalent rice. These reforms will be very difficult to bring about, for the obvious reason that the small farmers only accept changes with extreme caution; but in the course of time they will have to be introduced, especially when we reflect that the population of Japan increases at the rate of 300,000 souls per annum, and the extent of territory which has been reclaimed and is in cultivation is so small in proportion to the density of the population.

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE COMMERCE

Progress of Japanese commerce in the last fifteen years—Remarkable increase of exports and of the importation of raw material—Importation of capital in the form of machinery for native manufactories—Countries interested in Japanese commerce—Japanese merchants accused of occasionally producing inferior articles and not fulfilling their contracts—The reasons for the excess of imports over exports in the years 1894-98.

NOTHING can better illustrate the rapid progress made in Japanese commerce during the last thirty years than the development of her import and export trade, which is regularly recorded in a pamphlet published by the Japanese Minister of Finance, both in Japanese and English, entitled the 'Monthly Return of the Foreign Trade of the Empire of Japan,' which gives the fullest particulars respecting the commercial operations of the month, as well as a résumé of what has recently transpired. Each spring a complete volume is issued which supplies further details, and gives a table showing the commercial status throughout the preceding year. According to the figures given in this document, which are extremely accurate, the exports in 1898 attained the unusually high figure of £16,570,000, and the imports £27,700,000, making a total of £44,270,000. The following table displays very clearly the prodigious advance made in Japanese commerce during the thirty years included between 1868 and 1898.

The figures in the original document are, of course, given in Japanese currency, but, for the convenience of English readers, they are here rendered by their equivalent in English money, taking the yen at two shillings, the rate it has held for a considerable time past.

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JAPANESE FOREIGN COMMERCE.

	Imports.	Exports.
1868	£1,070,000	£1,550,000
1879	3,300,000	2,820,000
1884	3,220,000	3,400,000
1889	6,620,000	7,020,000
1894	12,170,000	11,330,000
1895	13,870,000	13,620,000
1896	17,170,000	11,780,000
1897	21,930,000	16,310,000
1898	27,700,000	16,570,000

By studying the statistics published in this official pamphlet, we find that out of £3,581,200 of indigenous articles exported from Japan in 1883, £2,713,900 were of a purely agricultural character, and only £242,200 represented articles manufactured in the country. This last class consisted only of the various articles included among the ancient art industries of Japan : £54,400 worth of ceramics and pottery, £54,300 of lacquer, £26,100 of paper fans, umbrellas, and fancy goods generally, etc. The silk industries did not even attain the comparatively low figure of £9,000. Five years later, in 1888, the situation was entirely changed. The export of indigenous merchandise exceeded £6,489,100, of which only 68·6 per cent. instead of 76·4 per cent. represented agricultural produce, 3 per cent. instead of 3·4 per cent. forestries, 5·2 per cent. instead of 6·7 per cent. of the total amount fisheries ; on the other hand, the various minerals had risen from 6·7 per cent. to 11·2 per cent., and manufactured goods rose from 6·8 per cent. to 11·8 per cent. Japan also exported £350,000 worth of copper and £300,000 worth of coal. The silk manufactories exported silk goods to the extent of £168,000, and all the art industries, with the sole exception of the lacquer, which remained stationary, rose very considerably in value. To these figures must be added the returns of certain other commercial products of a kind totally unknown in Japan a quarter of a century ago—matches, for instance, of which £74,000 worth were exported.

A glance at the following figures will show of what the Japanese export trade during the last three years was composed, and the nature of the goods.

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PRINCIPAL EXPORTS FROM JAPAN IN 1895, 1896, 1897 AND 1898.

	1895.	1896.	1897.	1898.
Raw silk and cocoons	£4,800,000	£2,880,000	£5,560,000	£4,200,000
Silk 'ravel' ...	290,000	280,000	300,000	270,000
Tea ...	820,000	640,000	780,000	820,000
Rice ...	720,000	790,000	610,000	590,000
Camphor ...	150,000	110,000	130,000	120,000
Cuttle-fish ...	100,000	110,000	140,000	?
Coal ...	760,000	890,000	1,150,000	1,520,000
Copper ...	520,000	550,000	580,000	730,000
Tissues and silk hand-kerchiefs ...	1,530,000	1,200,000	1,320,000	1,600,000
Sewing cotton ...	100,000	400,000	1,350,000	2,010,000
Spun cotton...	240,000	230,000	260,000	260,000
Matches ...	470,000	500,000	560,000	630,000
Mats and straw goods	480,000	530,000	640,000	630,000
Fans and screens ...	80,000	100,000	120,000	?
Pottery ...	200,000	200,000	180,000	200,000

Altogether the chief manufactured articles exported in the year 1895 were valued at £4,000,000 ; three years later they rose in value to £6,300,000.

At the present moment goods which were absolutely unknown in Japan in 1850 are exported from that country all over the East from Korea to Singapore ; and Japanese cotton goods, the raw material for which has to be imported from India, compete with Chinese materials of the same class, the raw material for which is obtained from the same country. Needless to say, Japanese silks and mats can be procured in every part of the world, and their coal, though inferior to the Welsh, being greasy, emitting great quantities of smoke and burning away quickly, is very cheap, and is supplied to all the steamers touching at the ports of the Far East from Korea to the Straits of Malacca. In the meantime, those industries for which Japan has always been noted have not diminished in importance. It must, however, be confessed that this branch of industry has decreased both in quality and beauty, the result, doubtless, of hasty and purely commercial production. If, however, very fine work is not produced so much as it was formerly, cheap Japanese artistic goods, ceramic and otherwise, flood the markets of the civilized world. A curious fact connected with the actual condition of Japanese export trade is the remarkable extension and increase in value of what

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might be called the new industries, of which by far the most important are those connected with cotton.

Meanwhile, the import trade has lately been considerably altered. Fifteen years ago Japan imported sugar and petroleum only. In 1897 raw cotton was introduced to the value of £4,300,000. If we add to this £100,000 worth of wool, £93,400 of pig-iron, £47,700 of steel, and one or two other minor items, we have a return of £5,900,000, or 23 per cent. of the entire imports; the food imports during the same year were also 23 per cent. The increase in the value of these latter in 1897, which stood at £5,900,000 as against £3,400,000 in the previous year, is due to the failure of the rice crop, which necessitated the importation of 3,800,000 cwt. of rice, valued at £2,180,000. A certain quantity of rice, between £400,000 and £800,000 worth, has to be imported annually from Korea and Indo-China, in order to counterbalance the amount of Japanese rice of the first quality exported to Europe and the United States. Besides rice, the import of sugar has reached the high figure of £1,980,000, and petroleum, of which 61,000,000 gallons were imported in 1897, £766,700.

Imported manufactured goods may be divided into two distinct classes, the first including articles of domestic use or consumption, and the second those which tend to extend the various industries of the country, and which in a sense constitute a certain proportion of capital. In the first category may be placed spun goods, both cotton and woollen, and watches; in the second, machinery, wrought iron and steel, rolling-stock and other materials for the railways.

Woollen industries did not exist in Japan until recently, for the simple reason that sheep were not introduced until after the opening of the ports to Europeans. In 1897, woollen goods were imported to the value of £133,700, and textile fabrics to £1,020,000; while watches, which were never seen in Japan until 1850, are now in general use, and in 1897, 305,894 of these necessary articles were imported and retailed at an average of about 12s. each.

The second class of manufactured articles imported into the Empire in 1897 includes £830,000 worth of wrought iron, £1,360,000 of machinery and boilers, £510,000 of locomotives and railway carriages and trucks, £330,000 of rails, and £200,000 of other railway stock, *i.e.*, 15 per cent. of the total imports. This rapid development, which compares very favour-

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ably with the two preceding years, 1896 and 1895, is mainly due to increased activity in railway construction since the Chinese War, and also to the rapid commercial expansion throughout the Empire.

The following table shows the manner in which Japanese foreign trade was shared among the various nations in 1896 :

	Exportation from Japan.	Importation into Japan.	Total.
Great Britain	£900,000	£5,920,000	£6,820,000
United States	3,150,000	1,640,000	4,780,000
China	1,380,000	2,130,000	3,510,000
Hong-Kong	2,000,000	910,000	2,970,000
British India	450,000	2,250,000	2,700,000
France	1,900,000	770,000	2,670,000
Germany	300,000	1,720,000	2,020,000
Korea	340,000	510,000	850,000

Japan also carries on a very extensive trade with other countries besides those above mentioned, among them Switzerland, Asiatic Russia, Italy, Australia, the Philippines, Cochin-China, Canada, etc., but in no case does it exceed £400,000 annually. The relative high figures of the business transacted between Japan and Hong-Kong is due to that port being a centre whence goods are distributed to other countries. One striking feature of the above table is the preponderance of the trade between Japan and England, from which country she derives all her cotton and linen goods, as well as nine-tenths of her machinery and wrought iron (nails excepted), and more than half of her woollens—in a word, the immense majority of all the manufactured commodities imported into the country. Germany sends machinery, cloth, almost all the iron nails, alcohol, sugar and paper; Belgium and Russia export manufactured articles into, but take almost nothing from, Japan. The principal French import is mousseline de laine, valued at £570,000, which is almost a French monopoly. About a fifth of the goods imported from America consists of machinery and wrought metals; the rest includes petroleum, raw cotton, flour and leather. The United States, France, and lastly Italy, are Japan's principal customers for raw silk, as well as for her light spun silks. Five-sixths of the tea grown in Japan goes to America and the rest to England. China, Korea and India

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take almost all the Japanese matches, while the coal will be found distributed along the whole of the Asiatic Coast of the Pacific. Copper goes to Hong-Kong, Germany and England, and rice, camphor, matting, straw and art goods are distributed all over Europe and the United States.

This brilliant picture of Japanese commercial prosperity has, unfortunately, its shady side. Many complain that the articles manufactured in Japan are not up to the mark in point of excellence and finish. As is generally the case with Orientals, they start well and make their first batch of goods admirably, but the quality soon falls off, probably the result, not so much of negligence, as of over-hasty production, due to competition. There can be no question that these and other complaints are not unfounded, and many intelligent Japanese are the first to acknowledge and deplore them. As an instance in point, matches are not nearly so well made as they used to be. Many complaints have also been made as to the increasing inferiority of a certain class of silk goods known as *haboutaye* and of the silk pocket-handkerchiefs, of which an enormous quantity are exported, with the result that the exportation of these last-mentioned necessary articles fell from 1,855,000 dozens in 1895, to 1,157,000 in 1897. On the other hand, there is a distinct increase in the export of *haboutaye*. Nevertheless many thoughtful people have watched this deterioration in the excellence of the new Japanese industries with some alarm, and not a few manufacturers who have had their attention drawn to the matter have already mended their ways. The same complaint might be made of goods manufactured in certain parts of Europe, notably in Germany, where cheap and showy articles are fabricated in superabundance, but Japan would do well to maintain her reputation as high as possible as a producer of all that is best in the market.

Still graver is the charge brought against Japanese merchants of occasional lapses from a high standard of honour, and of availing themselves of the slightest possible pretext to avoid fulfilling the letter of their contracts, in which they contrast unfavourably with the higher class of Chinese merchants, whose reputation for integrity and for a strict adherence not only to their written, but also to their verbal promises, is well known, with some degree, possibly, of exaggeration. It is as well to recall in this connection that the Japanese were until quite recently a feudal and military people, who despised

trade in all its branches, and those who were engaged in its pursuit were not considered any the better for being honest. In China, on the other hand, it has ever been otherwise, the merchants, after the literati, being looked upon as the most honourable class in the Empire, whereas the military were invariably despised, being recruited from the lowest ranks of society. Ideas have certainly been considerably modified in Japan in the last thirty years; still, the majority of the merchants are of the same class as their predecessors when they are not their immediate descendants; therefore, we should not be surprised if they retain some of their traditions it were better they were without. In a word, since the Restoration of 1868 the Japanese have done their best to get rid of the prejudices of feudal times, but although these are fast disappearing, some of their after-effects still remain.

It has always been extremely difficult to induce Orientals to understand the value of time, and in this particular the Japanese are still on a par with their neighbours. Foreign merchants have the greatest difficulty in persuading their Japanese correspondents that a few days', nay, a few hours' delay in the transaction of business and in the despatch of goods often leads not only to much inconvenience, but to absolute loss.

One of the chief desires of the Japanese at the present time is to see their export commerce pass from the hands of foreigners, who hold it, into their own; but they may rest assured that until they improve their business habits they will not succeed in carrying out their object in this direction.

It has been noticed that during the three years 1896, 1897 and 1898 the Japanese imports have been immensely in excess of their exports. This is probably due to the necessity of obtaining plant in great quantities for the immediate increase of the many new industries that have sprung up all over the country in so short a time. This financially has undoubtedly resulted in a distinct loss to the nation. The Chinese War indemnity brought a good deal of gold into the country, but the greater part of it has been expended in augmenting the navy and in the purchase of war materials. Fortunately, trade throughout Japan in 1899 was distinctly flourishing, thanks mainly to the abundance of the crops in the preceding year, and also to a curb having been put on exaggerated industrial activity, whereby, as already intimated, the imports were in excess of the exports, and the danger of a crisis in this direction

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was averted. This extraordinary commercial development in so remarkably short a period reflects the greatest credit upon the Japanese people, but we must not expect that it will continue progressing without encountering occasional checks, and there are not a few thoughtful people who foresee that the Japanese factories will soon have to compete very seriously with those which have been recently erected in the free ports of China. In this respect it may be remarked that salaries have risen at Shanghai, as well as at Osaka and Tokio. The acquisition of the island of Formosa will probably before long enable the Japanese to cultivate cotton and other tropical produce on their own territory, which will, of course, be a great gain to them.

CHAPTER VII

THE FINANCES OF JAPAN

Flourishing condition of Japanese finance on the eve of the war with China—Present Japanese financial problem the result of the important military, naval, and public works undertaken by the Government at the close of the war—Enormous expense of this programme, demanding a loan of £24,000,000—Gradual method of paying off this debt in nine instalments—Impossibility of floating the loan on the home market, all Japanese capital being locked up in the various newly-created industries—Debts incurred in connection with the programme of expansion, whereby the ordinary Budget was doubled—Progressive scale of taxation from the present date until 1905—Absolute necessity of augmenting certain taxes—Projected imposition of increased taxation, especially upon land and on beers, wines, and spirits—Taxation as compared with the population of Japan and other countries—Prospects of Japanese finance.

BEFORE the war with China, Japanese finance was in a most brilliant condition, and the fiscal year April 1st, 1893, to March 31st, 1894, the close of which preceded hostilities by only a few months and which is the last of which accurate accounts have been published, showed a return of £8,588,300 ordinary and £315,913 extraordinary revenue, making a total of £8,904,213, as against £8,458,187 expenditure, the surplus being £446,026, which on a Budget of £10,400,000 was a very creditable but by no means an exceptional result. As a matter of fact, there had been only one deficit, that of 1891-92, resulting from the exceptional expenses incurred by the nation through the disastrous effects of the earthquake of 1891, one of the most terrible on record even in Japan, where these dreadful visitations are of very frequent occurrence. The whole financial tendency of the preceding years is summed up in the statement that at the beginning of the year 1896-97 £3,900,000, derived from accumulated surpluses, was at the disposal of the Treasury,

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although £2,300,000 had already been withdrawn from this reserve fund to help in defraying the expenses of the war.

On the other hand, the National Debt at this period was not higher than £28,350,000, of which £1,570,000 was paper money in circulation. It had therefore diminished since 1890-91 by £2,300,000, of which £1,450,000 was due to the withdrawal of the paper money. These notes had been issued at a period when the new regime was not firmly established, the insurrection at Satsuma still to be suppressed, and the Government unable to obtain cash, even at a very high rate of interest. In 1881 the premium upon silver, the standard currency, had risen to 70 per cent., thanks to the energy of Count Matsukata, the very able Minister of Finance. It fell to 9 per cent. by 1884; in 1886 par was reached. The paper money of the State and the national banks was gradually withdrawn and replaced by notes of the Bank of Japan, payable at sight. In brief, if we compare the figures of the Debt and the Budget with those of the population, 41,500,000, we can only envy the financial situation of Japan on the eve of the war.

Although the expenses of the Chino-Japanese War, which were partly covered by the indemnity obtained from China and partly by a public loan, undoubtedly checked the progressive prosperity of the country, they had nothing whatever to do with the present financial problem, which has been created by the magnitude of the military, naval, industrial, and commercial enterprises undertaken by the Japanese Government since the close of the war. Between 1895 and 1896 the Government decided to double the strength of the army, by raising the number of divisions from six to twelve (exclusive of the Imperial Guard), and it will now thus muster 150,000, as against 70,000 to 75,000 on a peace footing, and 500,000, instead of from 270,000 to 280,000, in time of war. The fleet is to be increased from 43 vessels of 78,000 tons, *plus* 26 torpedo-boats, without a single cruiser, to 67 men-of-war, of which 7 are first-class battle-ships, with a displacement of 258,000 tons, besides 11 torpedo-boat destroyers and 115 torpedo-boats. The creation of numerous arsenals and fortifications will eventually complete the programme, but beyond these War Office expenses, very considerable sums have been spent in the construction of railways, extension of telegraph-lines, creation of new ports, subventions to the mercantile marine, and in the establishment of a second University at Kioto. The plan of railway extension which

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was decided upon in 1893 by the Diet must be completed according to contract in 1910. The other measures for the augmentation of the army and navy were included in the programme of the Ito Cabinet, which the Chambers accepted immediately after the signing of peace. This extra expenditure is to be disbursed in ten instalments from 1896 to 1906, and some further amendments and additions were made during the Parliamentary Session of 1896-97. The expenses entailed by these extensive schemes, together with the railways, are tabulated below :—

Navy and arsenals	...	...	...	...	£22,650,000
Army	...	...	...	...	8,220,000
Fortifications	...	...	...	...	940,000
Other military expenses	...	...	...	...	680,000
Railway construction	...	...	...	...	7,980,000
Increase and improvement of lines	...	...	...	...	2,650,000
Telephones	...	...	...	...	1,280,000
Construction of ports	...	...	...	...	790,000
Defence against floods	...	...	...	...	1,970,000
Subventions to banks	...	...	...	...	2,060,000
Creation of a tobacco monopoly	...	...	...	...	820,000
Subventions to various industries, commerce, agriculture, and other public works	...	...	...	...	1,460,000
Total					<u>£51,500,000</u>

Of this amount £32,495,670 was for War Office expenses, and £19,005,406 was intended for the very extensive commercial enterprises.

In 1893 a loan was voted to be issued as and when required to entirely cover the expense of the new railway lines. The indemnity was £30,000,000, *plus* £4,100,000 as compensation for the retrocession of the Liao-Tung Peninsula, imposed upon Japan by the Russian, French, and German Governments. This latter sum, as well as the first instalment, £7,500,000, of the indemnity was duly paid into the Japanese Treasury on November 8, 1895; the remainder was to be paid by regular instalments on May 8 of each year until 1902. China, however, availed herself of a clause allowing her to pay off the debt at once, and thus escape interest charges, which she did on May 8, 1898. Japanese statesmen had anticipated this act of the Chinese Government, and did not count upon more than £34,100,000. Of this sum £8,000,000 had been debited to the war account, leaving a balance of £26,100,000. In addition to these amounts, the

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Treasury held the accumulated surpluses, which, on April 1, 1896, attained £3,900,000, to which £500,000 must be added as the surplus in the Budget of 1896-97. The difference between the total of these receipts and the anticipated expenses was to be balanced by a loan known as 'the loan for State enterprises.' The following table exhibits the assets for this programme of expansion :

Chinese indemnity*	£26,100,000
Surpluses of previous Budgets... ..	4,400,000
Railway loan, £7,980,000	} 21,480,000
Loan for State enterprises, £13,500,000	
Total	<u>£51,980,000</u>

The expenses being £51,500,000, there would thus remain a surplus of nearly £500,000, thanks to the favourable result of the fiscal year 1896-97.

Apart from this financial scheme, however, there was still a war charge which had not been foreseen. It had at first been believed that the island of Formosa would be self-supporting, an illusion which was soon dispelled, and the Government had therefore to grant this new acquisition for a period of years a subvention from the Imperial Treasury of about £600,000, to obtain which various receipts officially described as extraordinary, such as voluntary contributions and restitutions, sales of State lands, and interest on divers funds had to be drawn upon. These receipts generally averaged £200,000, and by the year 1905-6, the time fixed for the conclusion of the expansion programme, will have furnished between £1,500,000 and £1,800,000; for the remainder it will be necessary to have recourse to a loan, and supposing that during this period the subvention of the Japanese Budget to Formosa, which must necessarily diminish year by year, rises to about £4,000,000, another loan of between £2,000,000 and £2,500,000 will have to be raised. Japan would therefore have to borrow about £24,000,000 from 1896-97 to meet the extraordinary expenses she had undertaken. On the other hand, when these were met,

* The Japanese took care to stipulate that the indemnity should be paid in gold at the exchange of the tael in 1895, which allowed them to know exactly on what amount of money they could count, which was of extreme importance to them, Japan having adopted the gold standard, and the greater part of the indemnity being destined to be spent in purchases in Europe and the United States.

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her ordinary Budget still remained greatly augmented by the necessity of maintaining an army and navy double what they were before the war.

This being the case, two important questions presented themselves. In the first place, was it possible to raise without difficulty a loan of £24,000,000, and from whence was it to be obtained? In the second, was the country sufficiently rich, once the scheme was executed, to maintain this increased expenditure, and by what means would it be able to obtain fresh resources to pay current expenses? The first question contained the principal difficulty. Not only did Japan need to borrow £24,000,000, but she had to borrow most of this without loss of time. Naturally, the Administration decided to carry out with the least possible delay the essential parts of the programme already determined upon, especially those connected with the national defence, and the Budgets of 1896, 1897, and 1898 were therefore most heavily charged with the extraordinary expenses. The extraordinary Budget of the first year reached £10,300,000, that of the second £14,200,000, that of the third £6,000,000. In no case, however, could the surpluses of the previous Budgets and the part already paid out of the indemnity (which was £20,600,000, of which £8,000,000 had been handed over to the War Office) have sufficed to provide such large amounts. It was therefore necessary to borrow in 1896-97 £1,830,000, in 1897-98 £6,880,000, while in 1898-99 a further issue of £4,500,000 had to be made. Now the grave situation which arose was this: the issues of 1896-97 were readily taken up by the public, but in 1897-98 only a third of the sum needed could be obtained, because the conditions of the market were too unfavourable and disposable capital was lacking. Whereas in the summer of 1897 £4,000,000 of a 5 per cent. Japanese loan was floated on the London market at par, the Government offered the Japanese people bonds bearing the same interest at 94, but they were not placed without much difficulty.

All the capital in Japan is locked up either in previously contracted State loans or in the innumerable commercial enterprises which have sprung up in the country during the past few years. When we remember that nine-tenths of the £40,000,000, at which the National Debt stood after the war, is in Japanese hands, and that it is with their own money that they have constructed railways and established new in-

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dustries, there is no ground for surprise at this lack of ready capital. In view, however, of the evident impossibility of placing a domestic loan for the sum required, two alternatives remained : a foreign loan, or a reduction to more modest proportion of the programme of expansion.

The result of an appeal to foreign capitalists would no doubt have proved successful if the attractive interest of from 5 to 5½ per cent. had been offered. Japan offers excellent security. Her finances have hitherto been admirably managed, and her liabilities do not appear to be in excess of the capabilities of her people. Nevertheless, the project of a foreign loan seems to have met with serious opposition from many eminent people in Japan, which arose from a twofold cause : first, fear of compromising the independence of the country by supplying foreigners with a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of the Empire, in case there was any difficulty in fulfilling obligations ; and, secondly, the national pride, which regarded it as humiliating for Japan to become indebted to Europe. This latter motive was doubtless the most powerful, but it rested upon an altogether exaggerated notion of national dignity. What all the great Powers of the world, except, perhaps, France and England, have done, Japan might do without sacrificing her dignity. The Japanese Government, after long hesitation, in which it perhaps missed the most favourable opportunity, decided in June, 1899, to issue a 4 per cent. loan on the London market at the rate of 90 francs. The high rate of issue did not greatly tempt the public, but that part of the loan not then subscribed will be gradually issued and advanced by the banks which undertook the issue, and thus the Japanese Treasury will find itself in possession of sufficient funds to proceed with its programme until money is more plentiful at home. In the meantime, so far as concerns the honourable intentions of the Japanese to fulfil their obligations, we may rely with safety upon their natural high sense of honour, and rest assured that they will do everything in their power to meet their obligations. Moreover, the resources of Japan, which I will briefly analyze, appear sufficient to enable the country to meet without much difficulty the interest on the loans as well as the permanent expenditure resulting from its greater national importance.

Let us, to begin with, review the principal items in the revenue as tabulated in the Budget of 1897-98 :

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Land tax	£3,870,000
Income tax	190,000
Tax on drinks	2,990,000
„ tobacco	310,000
Registration	750,000
Tax on sales, contracts, etc.	590,000
Customs	660,000
Various duties	490,000
Posts and telegraph	1,210,000
Profits of the State railways	540,000
Crown land products	290,000
Other items	250,000
Receipts from Formosa	810,000
Total	<u>£12,950,000</u>

This Budget is higher by one-half than that of 1893-94, the total of which we have already given, and whose ordinary receipts did not quite reach £8,600,000. This increase results from four causes : (1) better returns from the public services—railways and posts ; (2) a slight increase in the revenue from taxes whose rate has not changed, and also in the Crown lands ; (3) the establishment of two new taxes on registrations and sales, contracts, and other commercial deeds, the aggregate value of which increased the revenue by about £1,200,000 ; (4) the reorganization of the tax on drink, increased by £1,150,000, and of that on tobacco, in consequence of this product having been converted into a monopoly, the effects, however, of which were not felt in 1897-98, for it only came into force in January, 1898. To these we must add the receipts from Formosa, which, unfortunately, are not net receipts. The total revenue for the fiscal year 1897-98 was £12,950,000, and exceeded ordinary expenses by £600,000 ; but these figures will undoubtedly be greatly augmented when the programme of expansion is completed. It is calculated that by the year 1904-5 the ordinary expenses will stand as high as £17,300,000, in order to meet which it will be necessary to raise another £4,400,000 by increased taxation.

Taxation in Japan has a natural tendency to increase. During the years 1887-94 the annual rise was between $1\frac{1}{4}$ and $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. at a time, when it was not affected by any unusual excitement. This was before the war. Assuming that it only advances at the rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., it is expected that by the year 1904-5 the increase will add £500,000 to the £9,800,000 of 1897-98. On the other hand, the Customs

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tariff, which was kept exceedingly low by the treaties with foreign Powers, has risen in consequence of the revision of these treaties, and, it is hoped, will produce an increase of £600,000. The tobacco monopoly will also, it is anticipated, produce £800,000 per annum, an absolute increase of £500,000 on the existing returns. There remains, therefore, £2,800,000 to find, which will doubtlessly be obtained from the increased receipts of the posts, telegraph, and telephones, and by the extension of the State railways now in existence, and the exploitation of those in process of construction.

The recent excessive activity in commercial circles has suffered a check of late, a halt not very surprising after such a forced march. In the meantime, there is some risk that the returns of the posts and railways may not increase as rapidly as the more sanguine anticipate, for the new railways are not likely to prove as profitable as those already in existence, which pass through richer regions. During the interval 1892-96 the net railway returns to the State, without including any remarkable increase in the lengths of their lines, was doubled. By the year 1904 it is calculated that there will be 1,250 miles of rail instead of the 600 in 1897, which it is estimated will yield an increase of £550,000 upon the present returns. As to the posts, telegraph, and telephones, whose rough receipts were augmented by about 80 per cent. during the last four years, there is every reason to believe that they will in 1904-5 be £850,000 above what they are at present. Thus we have £1,400,000 added to the necessary £2,800,000. The remaining £1,400,000 will have to be taken from various other sources of taxation. The question now arises: Will the country stand further taxation without protest? The answer seems to me reassuring. The land tax before the Restoration and even to the close of the seventeenth century, as can be verified by reference to many important historical documents, was seven times more burdensome than it is at present, and was paid in kind—in rice, or other kindred products—and yielded to the daimios and the Central Government 147,000,000 bushels of rice per annum. At the price fetched by rice in 1897, when the harvest returned a fair average, the land tax should now represent about a sixth of this amount, and the total Budget of £17,300,000 anticipated for the year 1894-95 only claimed 93,100,000 bushels. If we add to these all the

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provincial and communal Budgets, we find not more than 127,400,000 bushels of rice. It is therefore untrue that the Japanese are not better off to-day than they were under the old regime. Since the introduction of the present financial conditions and the abolition of the feudal system, prices have increased enormously. From 1887 to 1897, according to the Monthly Returns published by the Bank of Japan, on the returns of about forty principal products of the Empire, we find that they have increased in value by no less than 73 per cent. Salaries have augmented even to a greater extent, and the population has risen 4,000,000, so that an addition of 45 per cent. upon the taxes leaves the taxpayer less heavily burdened than before. The most important of all these taxes may strike us as distinctly heavy, but we must not forget that in former times it was the only form of taxation. In those good old days nine-tenths of the population lived in the country, which was divided up among the daimios, the peasantry being their tenants; but at the abolition of the feudal system the peasants, under the new law, became proprietors, without having to pay a fraction either to their former masters or to the Government.

In 1896 the agricultural produce of Japan was valued at £62,600,000, exclusive of the produce of the fens, which, however, is very important. The land taxes, therefore, at £3,800,000 are only 5·6 per cent., and the local land tax 2·8 per cent of this total. All this is not excessive.

Finally, the land tax includes £352,500 derived from the tax on urban building land, which pays £1 12s. per acre, only four times as much as the rice-fields, and should easily return from £200,000 to £300,000 more. As regards the total of the land tax, it was decreased by one-sixth in 1877; an equivalent increase would bring in a return of about £600,000 more, and this could be effected without much inconvenience, owing to the general increase in the value of property. The tax on *saké*, the principal drink of the country, was raised in 1897 about one-half. It would bear augmentation, as at present it pays 5d. per gallon on a drink which is worth 1s. 3d. a gallon. In general, the Japanese financiers prefer to raise existing taxes rather than establish new ones. If we study the question from another point of view, and examine how best to increase Japanese taxes, let us consider the Budget as it will be five years hence, after the necessary taxes already mentioned have been added to it. Of the £17,300,000 of the Revenue,

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£3,400,000 will be derived from Crown lands, railways, and posts, £850,000 from Formosa, and £13,000,000 from monopolies and taxes paid by Japan proper. The population, increasing as it does at the rate of 350,000 to 400,000 souls a year, will have reached 45,500,000, contributing to the State at the rate of £13,000,000, or about 5s. 9d. per head, which does not seem to us excessive when compared with what is paid by people of other countries. A Frenchman, for instance, pays £3, an Italian £1 12s., a Russian 12s. 9d., an Egyptian 16s. 9d., and a Hindu 3s. 9d. I have not selected these nationalities haphazard, but because each of them has some special characteristic in common with Japan, especially Egypt, essentially an agricultural country. I do not think that anybody can maintain that an Italian, as a rule, is five or six times richer than a Japanese, or an Egyptian three times, or that the 130,000,000 of Russians, 20,000,000 of whom are Asiatics, possess incomes double the average to be found in Japan, and there is no doubt an immense inverse difference between a Hindu and a Japanese. Bearing in mind these facts, one must certainly conclude that the amount which the Jap will pay to his Treasury is considerably lighter than that obtained from almost every people in the Old World. With regard to the National Debt, five-sixths of which is held by natives, at the present moment it does not exceed £40,000,000, but it will reach its maximum in 1901, when it will stand at £49,930,000. The annual repayment stands at present at £720,000, but will increase to £1,000,000 in 1903, and go on augmenting, so that by 1938, unless fresh obligations are incurred beyond those already in view, Japan will be free of debt.

The financial difficulties confronting Japan at the present moment are therefore not so formidable as they appear. In 1899 the Chamber increased the land tax, which it had previously very persistently refused to do. At the same time it raised the tax on *saké* and on the posts. The Budget of ordinary receipts was therefore advanced to £19,000,000. This figure may appear excessive, but it shows a surplus of £4,000,000 on the actual expenses, a fact which indicates the intention of the Government to pay off as soon as possible the extraordinary expenses of the Ito programme, which means that these increased taxations are to be considered merely as temporary. They may possibly impede commerce at first, a

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thing which, unfortunately, cannot be helped, but, at any rate, the future will be considerably benefited thereby. The finances of Japan have, happily, always been managed in a highly satisfactory and prudent manner, and if the Empire carries out the present plan of expansion, and does not embark on any fresh schemes involving further outlay, Japan seems to have found a clear way out of the transient difficulties which at one time weighed upon her finances.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DOMESTIC POLITICS AND PARLIAMENT OF JAPAN

Present social organization—The nobles, or *kwasoku*; the *shizoku*, or ancient *samurai*; and the *heimin*—Equal civil rights for all citizens—Preponderance of the *samurai* in politics since the Restoration—Survival of the clan spirit—Japan governed during the past thirty years by the Choshu and Satsuma clans—Creation in 1889 of a Constitution modelled on that of Prussia—Parliamentary struggles against Cabinets governed by Southern clans—Frequent crises and dissolutions—A Ministerial crisis in Japan—Efforts of the Chamber to impose Ministerial responsibility and to replace the Government of clans by that of parties—Signs of improvement in the working of the representative system—Its prospects in Japan.

WE have now to study the least praiseworthy of the many institutions borrowed from Europe by modern Japan, that relating to the home politics of the country, which are very unsettled. Since 1889, when the Mikado, in fulfilment of the promise made to his people at the Restoration, first granted a Constitution analogous to that of Prussia, the Chambers have been dissolved not less than five times. A constant antagonism has existed between the representatives of the people and the various Cabinets which have succeeded each other; and if we except the time of the Chinese War, when the patriotism of the Japanese was so intense as to absorb even party feeling, we shall find that no Cabinet has been able to dispose of an important majority. In order to understand this state of affairs, we must recall the manner in which the Restoration took place, bearing in mind the actual social organization of Japan, and also the fact that the clan instinct has survived both class prejudice and feudal privileges, which were suppressed without the least opposition or regret.

Twenty-five years have now elapsed since the abolition of the old regime, and in the meantime the feudal system has been

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replaced, primarily by a centralized and absolute monarchy, and now by Parliamentary representation modelled on the European plan. The eighty odd historical provinces have become forty-five departments, each administered by a Prefect. The people are, however, still divided into three distinct classes: 'the aristocracy, or *kwazoku*, formed of a fusion of the ancient daimios with the *kuges*, or Court nobles, and of the *shin-kwazoku*, or newly ennobled persons (in all 644 families, consisting of about 4,162 persons); the *shizoku*, or ancient *samurai* (numbering 432,458 families, or 2,049,144 persons); and finally the *heimin*, or commoners; but apart from the predominance of the nobility in the composition of the Chamber of Peers* no privileges have been granted either to them or to the *shizoku*: their duties are exactly the same as those of any other members. From the social point of view we shall, however, very soon find that far less exclusiveness exists in this country, where feudalism was in full force only so recently as thirty years ago, than we should in many in Europe, where its abolition dates back in some instances several centuries. A Japanese gentleman recently said to me: 'In Japan we never dream of asking a person the first time we see him to what class he belongs.' I dare say some time-honoured privileges still linger in their inner circle, and that a few old-fashioned noblemen do consider themselves superior to the *heimin*, but they take great care not to display any such feeling. One meets members of the Japanese aristocracy in every public resort and place of amusement, and they mingle without the least hesitation with the rest of the public. I remember one day at Tokio being present at a wrestling match, a very favourite sport with the Japanese. Someone pointed out to me Prince K——, the President of the House of Peers, seated among the crowd on one of the steps of the ring. The Marquis H——, the descendent of a great family of daimios, was also present, as well as the Marquis Tokukawa, who is an ardent admirer of the sport and belongs to the family of the Shoguns, to have merely looked upon a member of which a generation or so back would have cost a man of the people his life. These gentlemen appeared to thoroughly enjoy the

* Many of the daimios, whose personal property was very small, are now extremely poor. The largest fortunes in Japan are those of the merchants and bankers, who under the old regime used to hide their wealth to avoid taxation.

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entertainment, and evidently thought very little or nothing at all of their former exclusiveness.

Although the highest positions in the Government are open to all, they have hitherto always remained in the hands of the *samurai*. Just as immediately after the Restoration, so to-day the country is governed by members of this very numerous and intelligent gentry. All the successive Ministers, the majority of whom have been ennobled, even made *kwazoku*, have sprung from its ranks. The same may be said of all the high officials, and, with very few exceptions, of the majority of the smaller employés of the Government, even down to the very police agents and the vast majority of the military and naval officers. This is not surprising when we remember that the *samurai* constituted before the Restoration not only the military, but also the student and literary class. Even now the greater number of the students at the University are recruited from among them, and as a proof that a sort of special respect is still entertained for them, they form the majority of the members of the Lower House, although they only possess one-twentieth of the voting power of the country. The mass of the Japanese people may be described as caring very little about public affairs; and it is, after all, perhaps as well that the political and administrative affairs of such a new country should be in the hands of a distinct and cultured class. This is, however, merely a transitory state of affairs, not a privilege. It is already observed that the proportion of the *heimin* in all public offices, even in the army, tends to increase rapidly.

The only marked feature of the former regime which still survives the many social changes that have recently taken place in Japan is the clan spirit, which is as strong to-day as ever. The bond which united the followers of a former feudal prince among themselves still subsists, although the prince himself may have fallen almost to the level of his clansmen. The men who have up to the present governed modern Japan have always belonged to southern clans, especially to those of Choshu and Satsuma; the two others, Hizen and Tosa, are less united, and although certain important political personages are of their number, they have had to fight their way to the front rather by dint of hard work than through any clan influence. The influential combination formed by the first-named clans, and unitedly known as the Sat-Cho, holds in

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its hands the reins of administration, rules the army, and makes its influence felt even more strongly in the navy. Their politics, however, are not quite identical. Those of the Satsuma, for instance, are usually believed to be rather more conservative and authoritative than otherwise, and it is from its ranks that are recruited the majority of the military party. The men of the Choshu, on the other hand, are more progressive and more subtle, but they are also accused of being too fond of money. The chiefs of these clans appear to understand each other sufficiently well to establish a sort of balance of power between themselves, occasionally collaborating in a Cabinet, at other times succeeding each other as distinct Ministries. In the rank and file there is considerable rivalry, positions and honours being more liberally distributed among the followers of those in power. During the earlier part of my visit to Japan, under the last Premier, Count Matsukata, the Satsuma clan was in the ascendant, and to give some idea of its influence all I need say is that the Minister of Finance, the President of the Council, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Home Minister, and the Minister of War and Marine—in short, the five most important Ministers out of eight—were of their number, and a sixth was a prominent member of the Choshu, their allied clan. Now the provinces of Yamaguchi and Kago-shima, which are the home of these two clans, contain only one out of the forty-two million inhabitants of the entire Empire. It is therefore not surprising that people in other parts of the country should complain of having so small a share in the Government. Imagine France ruled exclusively for thirty years by Provençaux! It would only be natural that such a state of affairs should lead to great dissatisfaction throughout the Republic.

So long as Japan remained an absolute monarchy, in which the Legislature was concentrated within a narrow circle, the Choshu and Satsuma Ministries succeeded each other without any noisy opposition; but when in 1890 Parliamentary Government was established, an immediate collision occurred between the Lower Chamber, which is composed of representatives from all parts of the country,* and the Cabinet,

* The Japanese Parliament is composed of two Chambers—the House of Lords, or Peers, to which belong (1) the Princes of the Blood (13); (2) all the Princes and Marquises (40); (3) such representatives as are elected for seven years by the Counts, Viscounts, and Barons (123);

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dominated by the Sat-Cho combination. Although according to the Constitution, analogous to that of Prussia, the Ministers are not responsible to the Chambers, but to the Emperor alone, and although the Budget of the current year, if the finance bill is not voted in due time, becomes by law that of the following year also, the irreconcilable opposition which manifested itself from the beginning greatly embarrassed the first Matsukata Ministry in 1891 and 1892, and the Ito Ministry which succeeded it. This latter, whose plans for the extension of the Navy were obstinately rejected by the Chamber, twice dissolved it: in December, 1893, and again in May, 1894. After the war patriotic feeling ran so high that people cared very little about the Government and its measures, and projected laws were adopted without the least opposition; but when affairs began to settle down it was otherwise. In 1897 and 1898 there were two dissolutions, and in the latter year the Ministry in power was the ninth since December, 1885, and the seventh since the establishment of the Parliamentary system. This gives an average of about two years for each Cabinet, and even less for the Chamber, of which not one has yet attained its legal term.

The reason for this persistent conflict is due in the first place to the popular assembly being hostile to the Government of the clansmen, and in the second because it is displeased that the Ministers are not responsible to it. Whilst professing the greatest respect for the Emperor, the Chamber considers that the Government should possess a Parliamentary majority in

(4) members who are nominated for life by the Emperor (100); (5) members elected, one for each department, and selected from among the fifteen more important personages of the department over thirty years of age (45). The Chamber of Deputies is composed of 300 members, one for every 128,000 inhabitants, and is elected by all Japanese subjects over twenty-five years of age who have resided in an electoral district for a term of twelve months, and who pay 30s. direct taxes. To be elected, the candidate must be over thirty years of age and fulfil the same conditions as above. The heads of noble families can neither be electors nor elected to the Lower Chamber. In 1895 there were 467,887 voters (11 per 1,000 inhabitants), and in all 517,130 persons (12 per 1,000), paying more than 30s. direct taxes. Among the first class there were 21,070, and among the second class 25,405 *shizoku*, or ancient *samurai*, from which fact we may take it for granted that there are fewer rich men among the ancient *samurai* than among the rest of the population. As to the nobles, so-called *kwazoku*, at least a third of the heads of noble families pay less than 30s. The proportion of *shizoku* among those having the right of vote is less than 5 per cent.

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order to retain power. It, moreover, complains of a certain lack of respect, Ministers rarely troubling to appear before it, and that it is seldom, if ever, addressed by any but high functionaries, appointed Government Commissioners for matters within their several departments. In a word, there exists considerable friction in the popular assembly against this state of affairs, which reduces it to the position of a mere debating society.

Now, all successive Cabinets have resolutely refused to consider the Lower Chamber in any other light, which gave rise to some curious incidents during the Ministerial and Parliamentary crisis of December, 1897, and January, 1898, which I had the good fortune to witness. The Cabinet, persuaded that the majority was hostile to it, determined to avoid even the semblance of dependence upon the Chamber, and therefore did not wait for the passing of a vote of censure, but dissolved the Chamber and offered their own resignation to the Emperor, to whom alone they considered themselves responsible.

Consequently, on December 24th the Emperor, according to custom, came in person to read the Speech from the Throne to the two united Chambers, who forthwith voted the usual answer. These two documents were very short, and the second, containing merely protestations of respect and loyalty, was unanimously adopted. On the morrow, scarcely had the order of the day been read and certain financial projects of the Government presented, than the doyen of the Chamber, Mr. Suzuki, asked leave to speak, and proposed the amendment, so as to enable the House to discuss a vote of censure. This amendment, which did not come as a surprise, being unanimously passed, the same gentleman returned immediately to the tribune and read out the following resolution, 'That the Chamber of Deputies declares it has no confidence in the present Ministry,' whereupon somebody presented a folded paper to the President, who silenced the speaker by announcing that he had just received an Imperial rescript, the tenor of which he informed the Chamber was as follows: 'In virtue of Article 3 of the Imperial Constitution, We hereby ordain that the Chamber of Deputies be dissolved forthwith.' The House rose, having met for only seven minutes, and simultaneously the Upper House was prorogued. Two days later, on the 27th, the Emperor received the resignation

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of Count Matsukata and his colleagues. On the evening of the same day the Marquis Ito, who had already twice been Premier, in 1886-88 and in 1892-96, and who is certainly the best known living Japanese statesman, was summoned to the palace. At first he hesitated about accepting the leadership of the Government under such very difficult circumstances, especially with respect to foreign affairs, Japan being at that time at the acute stage of her Chinese question, while home matters were embarrassed by several economical and financial obstructions of a very serious character, but nevertheless, the Marquis finally accepted. After ten days' fruitless negotiations, he was obliged to give up his difficult task ; but he was able, however, by the 12th of January to compose another Cabinet containing some excellent names, but it was a clan Ministry, including four Choshius and two Satsumas. In June he was obliged to dissolve Parliament, and the Ito Cabinet had to give way to another, formed under the Presidency of Count Okuma, a statesman of very progressive views, which may be described as the only genuine Parliamentary Cabinet Japan has yet known. The new Cabinet was not composed from a single party, but by a coalition of the two already existing, and leagued against the clans. It lasted but a short time, and towards the end of 1898 the Satsuma and Choshu parties returned to office under the Premiership of Marshal Yamagata.

As in the case of the clans, the parties are formed of groups of persons and interests. They have no defined programmes, but are constantly changing their views, and are mere cliques surrounding one or two influential politicians who aspire to replace the clan in office merely for the sake of the advantages to be obtained, and to be able to distribute posts among their relatives and friends. In the Parliament which was dissolved in 1897 by Count Matsukata the most important of these groups was that of the 'Progressives,' including some 90 to 95 members out of 300 ; then came the 'Liberals,' with about 80 adherents ; then the 'National Unionists,' 25 to 30 ; and, lastly, some twenty other subdivisions, besides the 'Independents.' The Progressives are more consistent, possibly because they have only been in existence since 1896. The Liberals, although the oldest group, have almost completely lost their influence and cohesion during the last two or three years.

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If you question a Japanese about the programmes of these different parties he will give very vague answers, and, for the matter of that, they are hardly distinguishable one from another. The demands presented by the Progressives to Count Matsukata in the autumn of 1897 were formulated in the vaguest terms, and confined to generalities, such as reforms in the administration, a magnanimous system of government, etc. The National Unionists are somewhat conservative in their tendencies, but their programme is also extremely nebulous. On one point, however, everybody seems agreed, and that is a horror of any attempt to increase taxation, and not even the most seductive of projects will induce the Chamber to budge an inch in this direction—an economical consistency which is a distinct virtue considering the youth and inexperience of the Japanese House of Representatives.

The influential politicians do not form a part of the Chamber, nearly all of them having been ennobled, and, what is more, with one exception, they are not avowed chiefs of any party. If Count Itagaki, an old Radical, is the official leader of the Liberals, Count Okuma, by far the most original statesman in the Empire, does not profess to be the leader of the Progressives, although he is extremely intimate with them. Neither does Marshal Yamagata openly declare his influence over the National Unionists. This action on the part of those who in any other country would be popularly known as leaders of the various parties undoubtedly weakens the influence of the several groups in the Japanese Parliament. As to the representatives of the two clans in power in the House, needless to say, the feeling of clanship carries all before it, even party interests. Three Satsuma deputies who belong to the Progressives immediately withdrew when this party in a preliminary meeting declared opposition to the Matsukata Ministry.

The men of the Southern clans have now governed Japan for over thirty years, and governed her well. The able and energetic statesmen of the first days of the Restoration have been succeeded by others of equal ability, and of the same school. They are surrounded, however, by a bureaucracy which existed in Japan even in the days of the last Shoguns, and closely resembles that of Prussia, which, although arrogant, is highly educated and progressive. They are supported by a powerful and well-disciplined army, a navy whose officers are for the most part members of the same clans as the

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Ministers, and the heads of the Civil Service. These men have led their country happily through a series of unexampled changes, transforming her from a feudal to a modern State administered on advanced principles. They have placed her in an excellent financial position, they have covered her with military glory, and have assured her a period of extraordinary prosperity and economic development. These observations force themselves upon the impartial spectator who visits Japan with the object of studying the remarkable progress she has made in so surprisingly short a time.

It is impossible not to feel some anxiety lest affairs should be wrenched from the hands of such experienced statesmen as those of the Satsuma and the Choshu clans, only to be scrambled for among the groups into which the Chamber is at present divided. This, however, need not make us despair of the success of Parliamentary Government in Japan. We must not forget that the British Parliament was not shaped in a day, and that in all countries in which this particular form of government has been accepted many years have had to elapse before it attained anything approaching perfection, and it is but natural that Japan should go through the same experience. To be just, however, considerable progress has lately been made in the right direction. The parties which possess any kind of adhesion have occasionally participated more or less directly in the Government. Marquis Ito brought Count Itagaki into the Cabinet of 1895, and at the end of his Ministry was himself supported in the Chamber by the Liberals. Then, again, in 1896 Count Matsukata came into power in company with Count Okuma, favoured by the Progressives. Throughout the whole of the Session of 1896-97, thanks to their support and to that of the secondary groups, the Government possessed a decided majority which did honour to the political acumen of the Ministers and to the wisdom of the members. Unfortunately, in the autumn of 1897 the Progressives grew tired of a Cabinet which did not fulfil its promises, and withdrew, carrying with them Count Okuma; but this attempt showed on the one hand that the Government had recognised the importance of an understanding with a party, and on the other that such an understanding possessed some staying power. Since the month of October, 1898, the Yamagata Ministry has had to deal with a very reasonable Parliament, which has unhesitatingly passed those laws which were required to extricate

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the country from its financial difficulties, and also divers measures necessitated by recently concluded treaties with European Powers. All this seems to indicate that under certain grave circumstances the Japanese Parliament is quite capable of rising to the occasion, and possesses the great quality, as I have said once before, of a spirit of economy often, unfortunately, absent from the more experienced Parliaments of Europe. If the Japanese Parliament ever returns to its old turbulent and boisterous humours, and insists upon governing instead of controlling, and if its irreconcilable Opposition incurs the risk of compromising the interests of the country, it is not at all improbable that the Constitution may be seriously embarrassed by a series of crises, but at present there is not much chance of exceptional measures creating any serious trouble. If the voters of Japan are apt to display an over-exuberance at elections, this is due in the main to the fact that they are new to their business, and moreover they form but a very small proportion of the population. The masses are absolutely indifferent to political agitation. The newspapers, which are read in the towns, make but slight reference to politics, and are mainly filled with gossip, novels and anecdotes, while to the vast majority of the people the Emperor is still a demi-god, and the last thing the commercial classes would approve would be a series of riotous scenes in the Chamber.

CHAPTER IX

JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY AND HER MILITARY POWER

The military forces of Japan—The part they may play in the Far East—Japanese army and navy—Excellent qualities and sound instruction of the troops—Remarkable power of organization displayed during the war with China—Importance of a Japanese alliance for the Powers interested in China—The feeling of Japan towards foreign countries—Her conservative policy in China since the war—Her policy hostile to Russia and favourable to England—The Korean Question—Motives which might lessen her feeling of hostility towards Russia—Japan the champion of the integrity of the Celestial Empire.

THE Japanese Parliament having voted the necessary funds for carrying out the programme of military, naval and economic expansion which was formulated by the Government after the Chino-Japanese War, the Empire will have, as we have already seen, without mentioning new railways and other public works, an army of 150,000 men on a peace footing, instead of from 70,000 to 75,000, and will be able to send into the field 500,000 men instead of from 270,000 to 280,000 men. Her fleet will be increased to 67 men-of-war, of 258,000 tons, 11 torpedo-boat destroyers, and 115 torpedo-boats, instead of the 33 vessels of 63,000 tonnage and 26 torpedo-boats she had before the war with China.

It is not expected that the completion of this programme of defence will take place before 1905 as regards the navy, and 1903 with respect to the army. As the matter stands, however, more than half the work is finished. Of the £21,300,000 voted to defray the expenses of the augmentation of the navy, which includes arsenals, docks, etc., it was stipulated that £13,300,000 was to be disbursed before April 1st, 1899, and £3,400,000 more between that date and April 1st, 1900. The lengthy opposition made by the

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Parliament with regard to the raising of taxes and foreign loans possibly may have retarded the works a little, especially those which have been executed in Japan; but the foreign orders have been fulfilled, and the Mikado's navy is now in possession of nearly all the new vessels contracted for. The completion of at least three out of the five arsenals is also far advanced. The same may be said of the army. Of the £7,900,000 demanded for its increase, £4,200,000 was spent before April, 1896, and £1,000,000 between that date and April, 1900. It may be well to remind my readers that when everything is completed the army will consist of twelve divisions instead of six, exclusive of the Imperial Guard. Three of these new divisions were completed when I was in Japan in 1898.

What constitutes the great importance of the Japanese factor in the Far East, and consequently throughout the world—the question of the Far East dominating all others—is that her military and maritime forces are on the spot. The Japanese navy would be respectable under any circumstances, for it is equal to that of either Italy or Germany; but it should be remembered that the Western nations cannot leave their coasts and their colonies unprotected, and consequently can only send a secondary portion of their maritime force, otherwise scattered throughout the world, into Chinese waters. It follows therefore that no other European Power, excepting perhaps England, could bring into these waters in case of war a fleet in any way comparable with that of the Mikado.*

What has been said of the naval power may be repeated with still greater emphasis of the military. It is needless to recall the difficulties to be overcome in transporting, notwithstanding the immense size of vessels now in use, even a single army corps to the Far East, the long and minute preparations necessary for such an enterprise, or the perils that are likely to be encountered, unless the sending Power is absolute mistress of the sea. Japan, thanks to her railways and Inland Sea, can now in a few days concentrate her whole army where no hostile vessel dare pursue it, in the island of Kiu-Siu, 125 miles from the coast of Korea, barely 500 miles from the mouth of the Yang-tsze-Kiang, a distance equalling that between Marseilles and Algiers, and 625 miles from the Bay of Pe-chili, and

* In normal times, before the exceptional augmentation of the effective resulting from the events of 1898, England had in the Far East only twenty-six vessels, and even now her fleet is still inferior to that of Japan.

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940 miles from the entrance to the Pei-ho, the river which flows to Peking. It could, therefore, in a few days after the declaration of war land in China and especially in Korea such a force as no European Power, excepting Russia, once the Trans-Siberian line is finished, could introduce in so short a time.* Since her fleet can easily protect her own territory, she need keep only a part of her reserves at home.

We have already seen that in the struggle with China, Japan, with her naval and military forces, easily overcame that rather contemptible enemy. It was evident that in this campaign the Japanese displayed remarkable organizing ability, and that the whole working of the delicate machinery of transports, ambulances, commissariat, etc., was admirably managed. This is a great point in their favour, especially when we remember that a similar compliment could not be paid to many a European expedition sent out against enemies less redoubtable than the Chinese. Even the English, after observing the manœuvres of the Japanese squadron during the Chino-Japanese War, did not hesitate to praise their excellence; and the military attaches who followed the Korean and Manchurian campaign expressed themselves equally impressed by the Japanese army.

The courage of the Japanese cannot be questioned. They have proved it in their long and bloody feudal wars, and, again, only twenty years ago, during the insurrection in Satsuma. Their patriotism is equally sincere, for they are the only Orientals among whom this sentiment exists, and with them it easily rises to fanaticism. The endurance of their troops is extraordinary. The subjects of the Mikado are unquestionably the best pedestrians in the world; and it needs no strain on the imagination to realize what must be the excellence of the infantry of a country whose peasantry use no cattle to draw their waggons, and who pass their winter months in making pilgrimages to distant sanctuaries in their own and in neighbouring provinces.

In Japan two men think nothing of dragging a jinrikisha sixty miles in twelve hours, taking only two for rest, and recommencing their journey the next day quite fresh. A Japanese battalion has been known to march twenty-five to thirty miles in a day, knapsack on back, without leaving any stragglers

* At the present time the Russian troops in Manchuria and the Lower Amur do not exceed 60,000 men.

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behind. The instruction of the soldiers—cavalry, perhaps, excepted—is excellent, and they learn very quickly. I have watched the manœuvres of some recruits who had only been six weeks in the regiment, and, although they had never in their lives been in European dress before, they wore their uniforms much more easily than many of our young soldiers. The Japanese are, moreover, excellent shots.

The raw material of the Japanese army is, therefore, exceedingly good. It is provided with first-class guns and cannon, and as the navy is composed of vessels built by the best builders in Europe and America, according to the latest models, it goes without saying that the artillery is worthy of the vessels which convey it. The staff may possibly not attain the same high standard as the rank and file, but this is difficult to pronounce upon, the data not being sufficient to assist us in forming a correct opinion. It seems, however, that it has been accused of lacking decision, and also of being too much under the influence of academic and technical theories, not paying sufficient attention to the exigencies of modern warfare.

Be this as it may, it is very probable that in the case of Japan going to war as the ally of a European Power, these defects would be much modified if they listened to the advice of their friends. In addition to the above, we must not forget to add that Japan is the only country of the Far East which works important coal-mines, and that two of the principal of these are situated in the island of Kiu-Siu, quite close to that part of the coast nearest Korea and China, and that she is, moreover, at the present day mistress of the Pescadors, a strategical point which Courbet valued very highly, situated in the middle of the China Sea. It will thus be easy to estimate of what value the co-operation of this nation would be to those Powers who are interested in the Middle Kingdom.

It is, therefore, necessary to know something of the feeling entertained by Japan towards the Sick Man of Peking, as well as towards the various doctors assembled round his bed, thinking less of the patient's recovery than of the eventual division of his legacy. So far as China is concerned, Japan is undoubtedly favourably disposed towards her, and since the war she has had no warmer, and, it may be added, no sincerer friend than her late enemy. If Japan had been allowed a free hand, she would undoubtedly have re-organized China to her own profit, but possibly Europe, in

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preventing this, displayed considerable acumen, for her so doing might in the long-run have proved dangerous. Next to being able to reform China herself, Japan would like her to undertake her own reformation, and place herself in a position to maintain her autonomy, so as not to fall a prey to the European Powers.

The Ministers of the Mikado are very naturally somewhat alarmed at the thought that their country may soon be the only one in the whole world inhabited by a non-European race that maintains its independence, and they cannot forbear asking themselves how long this independence may be allowed to last, all the more so since Japan is in immediate contact with, numerically speaking, the most powerful State in the world, the colossal Russian Empire, which borders upon China. Might not Japan under these circumstances be constantly menaced by so formidable a neighbour? Doubtless she would be able to resist an invasion, but at a terrific sacrifice—for to conquer Japan it would be necessary to exterminate many millions of Japanese. In any case Japan's foreign influence would be at an end, especially in Korea, which she has several times conquered, and upon which she still cherishes pretensions that date over 2,000 years. Even from the purely economic side she would suffer greatly; for her principal commercial outlet, China, might be closed to her for good.

These are the principal reasons which oblige the Japanese to remain the devoted friends of the Chinese Empire, and at the same time the adversaries of Russia, who, they believe, wishes to absorb China, and thereby dominate, if not the whole, at least the north, of the Asiatic Continent, and which compel them to throw in their lot with England. This latter Power does not aim at the political annexation of China; she only wishes to obtain additional facilities for her commerce and concessions for public works, and has therefore no intention whatever of surrounding the Celestial Empire by a formidable ring of Custom-houses. Undoubtedly Japan has had good reason to seek an alliance with England, and we need not be surprised at her distrust of Russia, which, having deprived her of the fruits of her continental conquests in 1895, three years later annexed them herself. As to England, her interest in obtaining the co-operation of Japan is so self-evident as only to need a passing allusion. Through her friendship with Japan she could obtain what she wants, not only in the Far East, but

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elsewhere, a large and well-organized army that, owing to an unquestionable supremacy on the sea, the result of the combination of two formidable fleets, could be easily and safely transported to the neighbouring continent.

May there not, however, be certain other reasons which might eventually induce not so much Great Britain to break off her Japanese alliance as Japan to sever her side of the compact and ultimately extend her hand to Russia? There is ground for the belief that such a proposition does exist, since there are Russophiles at Tokio and Japanophiles at St. Petersburg. Is it not, moreover, rather imprudent to oppose the progress the Tsar's Empire is making on the continent? It is, after all, an irresistible force resulting from the very nature of things, and therefore it were perchance wiser to be rather with Russia than against her. Then, again, it should be remembered that Russia displayed her goodwill towards Japan by leaving her a free hand in Korea, not, however, until after she had seized Port Arthur. True, the situation created in Korea by the compact of April, 1898, was precarious; and possibly, when once her position in the Far East is consolidated by the completion of the Trans-Siberian line, the Tsar's Government may rescind the concession which it has signed and occupy the peninsula. But even if we admit that this contingency is a possible one—and it is by no means absolutely certain that Russia does entertain any such project—Japan may still hope for compensation elsewhere in the centre or south of China round the province of Fu-kien, where she has already made her influence felt, as also at Borneo. Russia might also give certain tariff guarantees, and might it not be to her interest, less urgently, perhaps, than in the case of England, to secure the co-operation of Japan in case of conflict? And, finally, is Great Britain a very safe ally? May she not be simply using Japan for her own ends, thrusting her forward only perhaps to abandon her when she is committed? Will she lend assistance to a commercial rival?

These are arguments which are not without their influence at Tokio, where the difficulty of opposing a solid and durable barrier against the encroachments of Russia on the continent is fully appreciated, and where there certainly exists a feeling of distrust, not only of the English, but of all other Europeans. Political and military interference in continental affairs has

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never resulted otherwise than in weakening an insular power, and much as the subjects of the Mikado may desire Korea, it should not be forgotten that, however great Japan's interests may be in that direction, she may easily renounce her pretensions on *terra firma* if she were offered some material and tangible compensation elsewhere. It has been said that Japan had cast a longing eye on the Philippines, and certain signs led many to think that at one time she had played with the rebels in those islands much the same part enacted by the United States in Cuba ; but now America has seized upon these islands, and has also annexed Hawaii, another spot coveted by Japan. Unfortunately, Japan has come too late into the world to possess colonies, and must therefore content herself with the solitary Formosa, which, however, is a possession by no means to be despised.

Still, even now, Japan does not lose all hope of eventually obtaining a footing upon the continent ; but, providing that others do not handle China too roughly, she has no intention of interfering with her neighbour, certainly not to menace her integrity. She wishes only to consolidate her by augmenting at the same time her own influence, and would not intervene even if she thought the Celestial Empire were in danger. From the point of view of international politics, Japan is certainly a conservative element ; but in the day of struggle, should it ever occur, she is destined to weigh very heavily in the scale, not only in the solution of the question of the Far East, but also in the problem which rises behind it—that of supremacy in the Pacific, which will one day be fought out, not between the Whale and the Elephant, but between the Elephants of the Old and the New Worlds—that is to say, between Russia and the United States. But whatever may be the events which will eventually transpire, Japan apparently does not wish to precipitate a struggle, provided only that the maintenance of the *status quo* is not threatened by others.

CHAPTER X

THE FUTURE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION IN JAPAN—RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPANESE AND FOREIGNERS

Questions which are raised by the recent evolution in Japan—Can the Japanese assimilate the civilization of peoples of a different race?—Precedents and analogies—Up to what point does Japan wish to resemble Europe?—Character and degree of the changes which have taken place in Japan from the social, political, and economical point of view—Adaptation of Western institutions in Japan—Feeling of the Japanese towards foreigners—The revision of treaties with foreign Powers—The absolute necessity for Japan to enter into intimate relationship with the rest of the world if she wishes to retain her newly-acquired civilization.

To one who has studied Japan on the spot, a very serious question presents itself for solution, one of vast importance, not only to the inhabitants of that island Empire, but to the entire human family, *i.e.*, Will the evolution which this country has undergone prove permanent and not likely to collapse at a given moment, bringing with it the ruin of the State? In a word, the question is, whether it be possible for a people so suddenly to assimilate the old-established and elaborate civilization of another race. Let us, to begin with, remember that the Japanese have already afforded precedents proving that they possess powers of assimilation in a rare degree. From the third to the sixth century of our era they introduced Chinese civilization into their dominions, and from the ethnographic point of view, whether the Japanese belong to the Mongol or to the Malay family, they are not so far removed from the Chinese as the whites; nevertheless they are quite as distinct from them as are the Aryans from the Semites, and as the French or the Germans from the Arabs. The example of Russia is perhaps less marked, because more intimate affinities unite the Slavs to the Western races, and yet the Russians are the

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least Slav of any of the Slavs, being in reality for the most part Finns who have submitted to Slav influences. The Finns are related to the Mongols, and Muscovy, moreover, was under the Tatar yoke for three centuries, a dominion which has left a very profound impression on the race. Peter the Great's enterprise was therefore not an easy one. The principal objection, however, which can be brought against the example of Russia is that her evolution was never completed, and did not influence the lower strata of society sufficiently for it to become completely Europeanized. Hungary offers a better field of investigation in this direction, for the peoples who originally invaded her were distinctly Oriental, but now this country has become absolutely European, the result probably of an intimate connection between its inhabitants and their neighbours. But beyond these facts, there is one point which we should not overlook. Our own civilization is not the monopoly of one race, but was constructed by the concurrence of many people. It results directly from Roman and Greek civilization, and through these from Phœnician and Egyptian. The Egyptians, needless to say, were a branch of the Hamites, the most degraded white race of our time ; the Phœnicians, on the other hand, were Semites, and it was another Semitic race, the Arab, that during the Middle Ages held the light of civilization, and transmitted to us the inheritance of antiquity, after having widely extended its scientific uses. The whole history of our civilization, therefore, protests against its having ever been at any time monopolized by the Aryan branch of the white race.

Modern ethnography, based upon recent linguistic and anthropological discoveries, has shaken to its foundations those notions concerning the white races which were universally accepted in bygone times. We no longer hold that it was from the high plateau of Asia that swept those tribes who eventually peopled Europe, but that they radiated from the centre of Europe herself. Far from forming the majority of the inhabitants of the Continent, the Aryans, if that term still preserves its meaning, are but one of its elements. They have mingled everywhere in variable quantities among the different hordes of Finnish and other races who have overrun our continent. The varied formation of the skulls which has been observed among the different inhabitants of a single country corresponds with the predominance of one or other of these original

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elements, with the result that the unity of race which has hitherto been imagined to exist among all Western peoples is now proved to be chimerical.

Whatever truth these theories may contain, they are nevertheless subject to frequent modification, but it seems impossible with the present facts to sustain *à priori* that one race cannot assimilate the civilization of another. No doubt the Japanese differ more completely from the Europeans of the West than do the Russians, or even the Arabs, or than they themselves do from the Chinese; but once the unity of the human race is admitted, this becomes a mere question of degree of parentage. Must we, therefore, draw a line of degree between peoples beyond which the transmission of the civilization of the one cannot penetrate to the other, even as the French law fixes a limit to the transmission of inheritance? Nothing short of experience can solve the question. For the matter of that, the phenomenon is constantly taking place before our eyes, and if there be a people who might attempt it with hope of success, it is surely the Japanese, who to exceptional intelligence and remarkable powers of assimilation add a great spirit of enterprise and an uncommon energy.

Japan cannot be compared for a moment with China; for, much younger than her Celestial neighbour—since she received her civilization at her hands at a period contemporary with the fall of the Roman Empire, when the annals of China reached as far back into the night of time as those of Egypt—she has not had time to fossilize herself in sterile admiration of the past, and she has never adopted that mandarinism which China considers one of her chief glories, but which is in reality slowly ruining her. Above all, like Europe in the Middle Ages, she has submitted to the virile influences of the feudal system, and, therefore, there is no reason *à priori* why she should not succeed in her enterprise. Whether or no Japan wishes to convert herself on every point into an absolutely Europeanized nation, and a Western European nation at that, is another question which demands close attention. Possibly it is an exaggeration to say that the promoters of the remarkable series of reforms which have lately been effected in Japan had ever an eye to so complete a transformation. The first reform which engrossed their attention was undoubtedly to place their country, which had so suddenly broken through her ancient tradition of isolation, on a military, naval, and an

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economical basis, that would enable her to treat as an equal with any of the other nations of the world. The Japanese are the only Oriental people who have understood the conditions necessary to attain this aim. Japan discerned that by accepting a military and economic position equal to that of any European country, she was also obliged to undergo immense changes in every department of her national existence, and she unflinchingly faced her new position, resolved to accomplish every sort of transformation in order to place herself on a firm footing.

It seems to me that Japan has solved the difficult question as to which were the changes she ought to undergo. The fact that she has accepted the entire programme of European civilization, barring a few domestic usages, certain traditions of family existence and religion, speaks for itself. The religious question is one of the most interesting and curious phases of Japanese experience. Until the present day history has always demonstrated that the first act of a people which desired to model itself upon another was to adopt its religion, and in Japan itself 1,500 years ago Buddhism paved the way for the advent of Chinese civilization. In the sixteenth century, at a time when she was first brought into contact with Europeans, Christianity played an important part, and soon made many proselytes. To-day it is otherwise. The Mikado, it is true, does not prevent his subjects from embracing Christianity, but he does not encourage them to do so. Most probably this is the result of the fact that religion is no longer the foremost factor in Western civilization, and is somewhat veiled by important scientific discoveries and material improvements, and, whether rightly or wrongly, there can be no question that the spirit of the century pretends to solve political and social problems outside of the sphere of religion.

The Japanese have evidently arrived at the conclusion that it was unnecessary to effect a transformation in an order of ideas which the Europeans themselves apparently consider accessory. If one day they find that they have made a mistake, it probably will not take them long to change their minds; but for the present they have preferred to rally round the popular idea, neutrality of the State in matters of religion and freedom of conscience to all, and this allows them to retain Buddhism and Shintoism as the religion of the immense majority of the people.

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From the civil point of view, on the other hand, they have introduced many European reforms. Japanese society formerly resembled in many ways that of ancient Rome, especially with respect to the constitution of the family. The new civil code which has been carried into effect is more in accordance with modern ideas, and modifies the excessive habit of adoption, diminishes the power of the head of the family over his married children and his younger brothers, and raises somewhat the position of women, who were already freer in Japan than in any other Oriental country. But it also permits, in accordance with Japanese traditions, very slight difference to exist between legitimate and illegitimate children, and on this point, as on that of divorce—whether for good or otherwise I do not consider myself called upon to judge—it shapes itself very much on the same lines as does modern legislation elsewhere. The personal status, therefore, of a Japanese is very much the same as that of a European, and the laws relating to property have for a long time been identical with our own. As to the penal code, it is one of the most moderate in the world, and the death sentence is only passed in cases of crime against the Emperor.

Politically speaking, the Japanese have gone further still, and have given themselves a Constitution analogous, as already stated, to that of Prussia. It may perhaps be queried whether they were wise in accepting so entirely our representative system; but undoubtedly within the last eight years Parliamentary life in Japan has made rapid strides, and, indeed, is neither better nor worse than it is in many a European country. The parties do not come to stay long, and their programmes are very confused. The relation between the clans and the provinces plays a very conspicuous part in the Parliamentary existence; but, for the matter of that, so they do in Italy and elsewhere. Even if it has been a rather premature experience, nevertheless Parliamentary Government in Japan seems likely to stay. The numerous provincial and communal assemblies carry out their business fairly well, although, to be sure, there are whispers of a slight amount of corruption—but where is it otherwise? One of the happiest traits of Japanese evolution is that there appears little probability of its ending, like the great Russian transformation under Peter the Great, in the creation of two distinct classes, separated by an insurmountable barrier. There is no serfdom

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or anything to maintain the Japanese peasantry in the same position of inferiority as the Russian mujik, and the mass of the nation unhesitatingly follows the lead of its chiefs.

Refined by from twelve to fifteen centuries of civilization, the subjects of the Mikado are much better educated than were those of Peter the Great, and therefore can march with far greater assurance on the road to progress. While the smallness of the country and the density of its population, concentrated for the most part on the coast-line, are likewise aids to the rapid penetration of new ideas, still further assisted by a well-organized system of primary instruction and a military service, it is, however, rather from the material point of view that the change has been most striking and rapid.

Without returning to the matter of the extraordinary rapidity of the increase of industry, there is one subject connected with it which I cannot forbear dwelling upon, and that is the excessive ability with which the Japanese have succeeded in organizing certain public services introduced from the West in such a manner as to place them within the reach of even the poorest. In many European colonies the high tariff of the rail and postal services deters the natives from using them; but in Japan it is otherwise. There you pay on the railway $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a mile first class, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. second, and $\frac{1}{4}$ d. third, which latter is used by the majority of the people, and the total returns for 2,290 miles of Japanese rail, notwithstanding these low rates, reached in 1895 £1,878,600 (of which £1,179,600 were paid by travellers), as against £766,300 for expenses, the profits being £1,112,300, or about 10 per cent. upon the outlay capital, which was £11,649,200. The post is also extremely cheap in Japan, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. being charged for letters and $\frac{1}{4}$ d. for post-cards. In 1896-97 503,000,000 objects passed through the post-office, of which 263,000,000 were post-cards, 122,000,000 letters, and 87,000,000 newspapers. The preponderating number of post-cards, which surpasses that of letters, is strikingly in contradistinction to what one observes in every other country, and is a proof of the economical habits of the people and of their appreciation of this cheap method of correspondence. The enthusiasm with which the population profits by all the innovations introduced from the West is a convincing proof of the very slight resistance which the implanting of our civilization receives. Yet another favourable sign is the exceptional number of students in the new universities and public schools

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of all descriptions. Practical science, law, and medicine attract the majority of the students, and already many of them have attained marked success in their several careers. As an example, I may mention that it was a Japanese who discovered the microbe of the bubonic plague. The Japanese are sometimes, and possibly with some truth, accused of lacking the inventive faculty ; but those peoples who are from many points of view at the head of civilization at the present day, the English and the Americans, are not those among whom the power of invention is exceptionally prominent. It is in France or in Germany that the principles of nearly all modern discoveries have been found, but it is in England and the United States that their application has been perfected. No one, however, can refuse the Japanese this latter gift, and they unquestionably possess an almost excessive faculty of attention to minute detail. Possibly they have not so far materially assisted in advancing science, and surely it is somewhat premature to pronounce judgment on this subject ; but with good technical teachers—and everything points that they will have them—they can certainly soon acclimatize European civilization in their country, precisely as they did in days of old that of China, but only on the condition that they keep themselves well in touch with Europe.

Their principal danger, however, seems to me to consist in their attempting to isolate themselves too much, and to believe that they have learnt everything that can be taught them, and consequently have no further use for their masters. Perhaps, too, in certain cases they have got rid only too quickly of the services of foreign functionaries and councillors. Throughout the whole of the eighteenth century Russia, so to speak, modelled herself on the German plan, and Japan would also do well not to forget too hastily the advice of Western teachers. Already a certain amount of negligence is noticeable in the post-office and on the railways, whose systems are occasionally dislocated by many irregularities and also by a certain carelessness, usually attributed to excess of work or to the breakdown of machinery, but which is more probably due to the inexperience of the public servants of the entire hierarchy. The fact is, Japan does not at present value the most characteristic feature of modern civilization—punctuality ; but, to be just, when we consider the indolent habits of Asiatics in general, we should not be surprised at this, rather the contrary. It would, how-

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ever, be well for the Japanese, until they have got thoroughly trained to an appreciation of the value of time, to retain officials who will remind them of its importance.

It may also be added that in the commercial development considerable inexperience and too great zeal in every branch, industrial, financial, and commercial, has been displayed : in the over-rapid increase, for instance, of banks and companies of all kinds, in the mismanagement of new societies, and in the abuse that has frequently been made of credit. All these things are new to Japan, and they have occasionally not been treated as they should have been. We have bestowed so much praise on the economical development of the country that we may surely be allowed to observe that much has been done too quickly. But this has been the case in all new countries, in the two Americas, as well as in Australia, and one must not therefore be too severe on Japan in this respect, but also not surprised if it occasionally results in the paralysis of business and even in an occasional crisis. As often occurs, a rise in salaries accompanied industrial expansion, and proved very inconvenient to export industries, all the more so as these are for the most part mainly nominal, and prices rose almost immediately. During the last two years an inverse movement has taken place, and we must do the Japanese the justice to say that when they saw the danger they displayed considerable sagacity, and both the Government and the public expressed a wish to limit their desire for expansion. If there were serious economic difficulties in Japan in 1897-98, they seem now to have passed away ; they were but the result of over-activity, and the present outlook in the Mikado's dominion, although not as brilliant as it was immediately after the war, is once more normal.

The transitory troubles of the Empire of the Rising Sun will not, in our opinion, become very grave if the Japanese thoroughly understand that it is to their interest rather to increase their contact with foreigners than to limit it. Since 1889 there has existed in Japan a reactionary movement against strangers, which apparently reached its culminating point in 1896, and now seems gradually diminishing. It is sincerely to be hoped that this feeling of suspicion will absolutely disappear. One of the numerous reasons which contributed to raise a certain hostility against Europeans was their attitude with respect to the renewal of the treaties. This important question, which

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so closely concerned the relations between the Japanese and foreigners, has now been settled, and if Japanese statesmen are well inspired, the solution that has been arrived at should greatly enhance the true interests of their country.

Almost immediately after the Restoration, the Government of the Mikado expressed the desire to revise the treaties concluded between it and the foreign Powers during the last years of the old regime. What it most desired was to abrogate the extra-territorial privileges granted to strangers; and to render them responsible to the native tribunals. It also hoped to re-possession itself of the right to modify the Custom-house tariff, which was very low, not with a view to protection, but in order to augment the revenues. In exchange for these concessions Japan offered to open the country to Europeans, to allow them to reside and to establish their industries anywhere outside of the five ports in which they had hitherto been confined. Joint negotiations were opened with the seventeen Powers who had signed the treaties on several occasions, but without favourable results, and the check they received in 1897 greatly irritated public opinion in Japan. The Government then decided to negotiate separately through the intermediary of its representatives in Europe. The first success was with England, by the treaty concluded in 1894; the other nations followed suit, and the new treaties were enforced on July 17th, 1899.

For several years, however, a change had taken place in public opinion in Japan, and many people began to think that it might be as dangerous to completely open the country to foreigners as to grant them privileges of proprietorship. 'They are much richer than we are,' said they, 'and will buy up all our lands and strip us of our resources, so that in time we shall cease to be masters in our own house.' On the other hand, the Europeans began to make an outcry at the thought that they would be obliged to submit to Japanese jurisdiction, which, although founded on the European system, might be misapplied by the Yellow people, who were still barbarians, and who might use it to make the existence of foreigners in Japan intolerable. Both views of the case were exaggerated, and rendered the task of the various diplomatists an exceedingly difficult one. Diplomacy, however, carried the day, not without sacrificing the proposed absolute equality of rights between Japanese and foreigners.

The new treaties accepted the Japanese desideratum respecting the suppression of consular tribunals and European municipalities, but foreigners were, in their turn, to renounce proprietary rights. The English treaty thus summarizes the principal concessions granted: 'All members of the principal contracting parties may carry on any wholesale or retail business, in any sort of product, manufactures and merchandise, personally or by their representatives, individually or through an association, either with other foreigners or with natives; and they shall have the right to possess, let or occupy houses, shops, manufactories and other premises as they deem necessary, or to hire lands, to live therein, or to engage therein in business, by conforming themselves to the laws, and the police and Custom-house regulations of the country, as if they were natives thereof.' This gave rise to considerable controversy. It confirmed the right of foreigners to possess, let or occupy houses and divers places of business, but on the other hand, it only allowed them to rent land, which according to Japanese law can only be hired on short leases of between thirty and fifty years, as the case may be, which is, of course, a great hindrance to the installation of any important industry.

This apparent contradiction formed the subject of an agitated controversy carried on by the English papers printed at the various ports, which pointed out with rather thoughtless acrimony that the new treaty was only intended as a blind to deprive foreigners of their extra-territorial liberties. They forgot that outside of property and of the leasehold system the Japanese code contains another method of tenure, called 'Surface Right,' whereby the purchaser of a piece of land has the right to everything that is on the surface thereof (excepting the crops), that is, to plant or cut down trees and to build thereon. One can purchase the surface of the land in accordance with Japanese law for as long a period of time as one likes, a thousand years even, either on payment by instalments or complete purchase. For any enterprise which is not purely agricultural this purchase is equivalent to absolute possession of the land.

Foreigners can thus establish industries in Japan, and it is therefore to the interests of the Japanese to encourage them so to do. Private individuals, as well as the Government, ought to do everything they can to attract foreign capital, but this can only be done in the case of industrial enterprises by allow-

ing foreigners to take the direction of affairs. I have been asked whether it is not possible to induce foreign capitalists to lend their money on sharing terms to Japanese companies as they do to the American railways, without taking any part in the direction, but I am afraid this is a hope the Japanese would do well not to entertain. Whether it be through prejudice or otherwise, it is quite certain that Europeans will do nothing of the sort, and the Japanese seem to be aware of the fact, and several railway companies have modified their statutes in order to admit a clause whereby foreigners can become shareholders; but as the Japanese possess all the land over which the lines run as well as the stations, I do not think that this proposition can be legal. It is, therefore, to be regretted that public opinion has not insisted upon a concession of the right of proprietorship being bestowed upon foreigners.

It is, however, not improbable that before long the Legislature may get over this difficulty by deciding that in companies constituted according to Japanese laws, and registered in Japan, the members, though they be foreigners, become thereby Japanese citizens, and can also be absolute land-owners. However, on all points the Japanese Government, supported by Parliament and public opinion, has taken the necessary precautions to apply the new treaties in the most liberal manner possible. If there have been some unfavourable verdicts pronounced in the Japanese tribunals in the short time they have been in existence, these have generally been revised on appeal. The greater experience gained by contact between the Japanese and Europeans, and the wish to see foreign capital collaborating in the development of the resources of the country, will doubtless suggest, little by little, new measures calculated to smooth down any feeling of irritation between the native and the foreign population. If there still exists a feeling of hatred of the foreigner among individual fanatics, a certain ill-will in the lower and more ignorant class of the people, some abuse of authority among inferior officials, the Government of the Mikado is too sagacious to allow any flagrant cause of annoyance to disturb European residents, which would soon be resented by their respective Governments and might even lead to the scattering of the fruits of thirty years' progressive effort.

Japan has already done much, but especially because she has done so much in so short a time, and because the immense

majority of her inhabitants had no idea thirty years ago of European affairs, and therefore have no means of comparison, they are apt to exaggerate their progress, however marvellous it may be, and consequently they are not in a position to notice that certain European importations come to them slightly deteriorated. Foreigners act the part of critics, and even if their criticism is sometimes severe, it is nevertheless useful. The functionaries and the young men who are sent on foreign missions also fulfil the same critical office, and this is an additional reason why the Government is so wise in maintaining these missions. Unless, indeed, from time to time the new civilization which has been imported in Japan is refreshed at its primary source, it will soon run a risk of losing strength, and, for the matter of that, any people, even European, that isolated itself too much and became absorbed in self-admiration, would inevitably deteriorate. It is not belittling the extraordinary progress so rapidly accomplished by the Empire of the Rising Sun to say that it can only be perfected if the people of that wonderful country remain in contact with the inhabitants of Europe and America.

PART III.—CHINA

CHAPTER I

THE CHINESE PROBLEM

Actual position of the Far Eastern Question—The Sick Man of Peking—The wealth of his heritage—The immense resources of the soil and subsoil of China, the latter of which is still virgin—The results which may be expected from the opening up of China—Change in the attitude of the Powers towards the Celestial Empire since the Japanese victories revealed its weakness—The origins of the Far Eastern problem.

THE decisive victory which Japan obtained over China five years ago revealed to the civilized world the existence in the East of Asia of another Sick Man, an even greater invalid and infinitely richer than the better known patient at Constantinople. Four times the size, and twelve or fifteen times more densely peopled than the Ottoman Empire, China contains a much smaller proportion of deserts, her resources are greater and far more varied, and her inhabitants are not only more industrious, but more peaceful and apparently much easier to govern. Therefore, at the end of the nineteenth century—when the material wealth of a country is of far greater importance than its historical memories, and men are more eager to discover fresh openings for enterprise, new lands to cultivate, or mines to exploit than relics to preserve or peoples to liberate—Europe abandons the bedside of the Grand Turk to occupy herself with her chances of inheriting far greater riches from the Son of Heaven. The Sick Man on the shores of the Bosphorus may be afflicted with some dreadful convulsion or crisis in his illness, but the nations pretend not to perceive his contortions, and joyfully welcome any evidence of

even a feeble return to health; in a word, they only seek to prolong his existence. If the preservation of peace in Europe has its share in this attitude, the wish not to be disturbed in the work which she pursues in China has also its share in the position which Russia and more than one other Power have assumed with regard to the Chinese Empire.

The fact is, the nations have promised themselves a booty in the Middle Kingdom as precious as it is easy to obtain. China from this point of view is worth a great deal more than Turkey, or even Africa, which Europe has so eagerly sought to divide. Although less extensive than the Dark Continent, China is much more thickly peopled, and the climate is less unhealthy, access easier, the rivers more navigable, and the soil far more fertile. The patient and laborious Chinese will eventually facilitate the exploitation of the wealth of their vast territory, which is more than can ever be expected from the barbarous, ignorant and indolent peoples of Africa.

The resources of China are greater than those of Africa, and many of them are still absolutely undeveloped. The Chinese peasants, moreover, are among the best agriculturists in the world. As evidence of this assertion, it should be remembered that, by the perfection of their method of cultivation, they extract from the soil of their plains sufficient to enable their rural population to multiply in a manner unknown in the Western world. Certain provinces in the Valley of the Yangtsze-Kiang—Shan-tung, Hu-pe, Kiang-su, and others—in spite of their being purely agricultural, are as densely peopled as Belgium, and we may further observe that, as is the case throughout the Far East, wherever rice dominates, the mountain regions are almost uninhabited. If the soil is admirably cultivated, the subsoil, on the other hand, is absolutely neglected, and only an insignificant quantity of coal is extracted from the immense coal-beds which cover over 40,000 square miles on the banks of the Yellow River, in the plains of Hu-nan, and under the terraces of Shan-si, which, together with those equally important in the basin of Shan-tung, were so highly extolled by the celebrated traveller Richthofen. The coal-beds in Central China appear to be even more extensive, and the carboniferous basin of Sze-chuan, where there is also petroleum, covers an area equal to half France. The coal-beds of Hu-nan are also very considerable, and minerals are equally abundant. The copper-mines of Yunnan are so rich as to have

proved one of the chief inducements that attracted the French to Tongking. Mines of precious ore are known to exist in many other places, but, notwithstanding their very ancient civilization, the Chinese have scarcely touched the wealth beneath their feet. In this respect they have proved themselves inferior to the classical nations of antiquity, and have left their riches to be garnered by foreigners.

We can form some idea of the development of which China is susceptible by considering the example of two other Asiatic nations placed in much the same conditions—British India and Japan. India, with all her dependencies, is about a sixth larger than China proper, but contains only about three-quarters of the number of her inhabitants; yet although her subsoil is much less rich and her population far more indolent than the Chinese, she carries on double the trade with Europe that the Chinese Empire does. Japan, nine times smaller and nine times less peopled than China, but reformed by an enlightened Government and by the introduction of European methods, has seen her commerce rise in thirty years from £5,000,000 to £44,000,000, more than three-quarters higher than that of her enormous but stationary neighbour.

Unfortunately, an imbecile Government, as corrupt as it is absurdly exclusive, impedes the progress of China with far greater obstinacy than do the prejudices of her people. So long as the illusion lasted as to the power of this unwieldy Empire, no one ventured to tear from it by force what it was imagined could be obtained by persuasion, and the nations resigned themselves to permit the immense resources of the interior to remain untouched, contenting themselves merely with the opening of a few ports to commerce. But in 1894 the brilliant victories of the Japanese revealed to an astonished world the weakness of the colossus, its corruption, and utter incapacity to regenerate itself; hence the reason why the Chino-Japanese War may be rightly considered one of the greatest events in contemporary history. From it dates the change in the attitude of the foreign Powers towards the Celestial Empire. They now command where formerly they begged, and have mustered up courage to force the Son of Heaven to put a price on the treasures of his Empire, or else to allow them to do so in his stead. If they have not already divided up his territory, they mortgage portions of his provinces, and obtain mining, railway, and all sorts of other concessions.

In the eyes of the Powers China is no longer a country to be counted with as a probable ally, but merely one which they may one day reduce to vassalage.

In 1895, after the conclusion of the war, Russia inaugurated the new policy with respect to China. She was at that time the only European nation that seemed to have any idea of the weakness of China, and was already preparing, by the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, to play an important part in the Far East. Germany, France, and England in 1897 obtained the 'leases' of various strategical points on the coast and the recognition of what they were pleased to call 'spheres of influence.' Russia now returned to the game, and Japan also took a part in the struggle. From the middle of 1898 a lull has occurred, which recent events, however, have disturbed and proved that the Far Eastern problem is far from settled. It would certainly have surprised men who were living at the beginning of this dying century if they had been told that it would close before the Grand Turk was driven out of Europe, and yet the destinies of Eastern Asia are even now far from being determined. The problems which rise round the future of the Celestial Empire are neither less grave nor less complicated now than they ever were. Although China is infinitely less heterogeneous than Turkey, she runs the same dangers from internal disturbance; for she is governed by a foreign dynasty and honeycombed by secret societies. The Central Government is feeble and without cohesion. On the other hand, the rivalry which exists between the European Powers, to whom should be added the United States and Japan, is not less active in the East than it is in the West of Asia. The only, but still enormous, result which has been more or less definitely obtained consequent upon the events of the last five years—the end of the isolation from Europe in which China has hitherto existed, and her being brought for the first time since the beginning of her history into contact with a civilization which has developed quite independently of her own—creates a situation of the intensest interest. If the lack of military qualities among the Chinese and the insufficiency in numbers of the Japanese renders the Yellow Peril, comparatively speaking, little to be feared from the war side of the question, many people, and among them the most enterprising representatives of European civilization, the Americans and Australians, are greatly exercised over the

matter from the economic point of view. It would, however, be presumptuous to attempt to prophesy what would be the consequences of the dissolution of the Chinese Empire through internal disorder, or of its partition amongst the Powers in consequence of an international treaty, or after a war which would be sure to become universal, or even of the reawakening of this oldest State in the world by the introduction of Western ideas and methods, or finally of a struggle between the White and the Yellow races; but it is comparatively easy, now that the question poses itself for the first time, to determine its multiple elements, to study the relative position of its diverse factors, the near prospect of their action, and the situation of the patient round whose sick-bed eagerly press the many doctors and heirs of so wealthy an invalid as China.

CHAPTER II

THE CAPITAL OF CHINA

The coasts of Pe-chi-li and the mouth of the Pei-ho—Ta-ku and Tien-tsin—From Tien-tsin to Peking by rail—Peking: the Forbidden, Imperial, Tatar and Chinese cities; the walls, streets, houses, shops and monuments—Behaviour of the natives towards foreigners—Decadence of the capital and of the whole Empire.

IF one enters China from Eastern Siberia by the Gulf of Pe-chi-li after a long voyage round the Korean Peninsula, the first impression of the Celestial Empire is distinctly unattractive. The contrast between the shallow waters where the vessel casts anchor, some miles distant from the mouth of the Pei-ho, and the noble port of Vladivostok, or the enchanting Bay of Nagasaki, with its verdant shores and blue waters, enlivened by the picturesque sails of the fishing-junks, is, to say the least, extremely depressing.

Nearly all the ports of the Celestial Empire are thus formed, and can only be entered during a few hours of the day. Even the mouth of the great Blue River is encumbered with shoals, and its famous rival, the Yellow River, in its lower basin, is divided up into such a multitude of channels that meander through the marshy lands as to interrupt all direct navigation from the sea. The Gulf of Pe-chi-li, which may be described as the port of Peking, although situated closer to the Equator than the Bay of Naples, or the mouth of the Tagus, seems, with its choked-up estuaries, its storm-beaten shores, its fogs and icy coat in winter, thoroughly typical of China and her traditional inhospitality, and her eagerness rather to repulse than to invite the stranger within her gates. From the anchorage outside the bar it is difficult to discern the low-lying coast; and the first objects to attract attention are mud forts, mud houses in mud villages, and mud heaps marking the

graves in the cemeteries. This uninviting place is Ta-ku, beyond which, a little higher up, at Tang-ku, the Pei-ho ceases to be navigable for vessels of any tonnage. On landing, a surprise awaits you—the railway. Commenced by Li Hung-chang, for the purpose of transporting the coal from his mines at Kaiping, a few miles to the north-east, branches have been added, and since the summer of 1897 it takes the traveller to Peking viâ Tien-tsin. An hour and a half after leaving Tang-ku, I alighted at the former town amid a mob of noisy coolies, who pounced upon me and my luggage. We crossed the Pei-ho in a sampang instead of the ordinary ferry-boat which conveys the Celestials, packed together like sardines in a box, and stuck, apparently immovably, in the most extraordinary postures. From the landing-place, we were trotted in a jinrikisha drawn by a Chinaman through the Rue de France, up Victoria Road to the Astor House, an American hotel kept by a German; opposite it is a garden, over which a white flag with a crimson circle in its centre, the emblem of the Rising Sun, announces that the garden and the house belong to the Japanese Consul. Thus was I first initiated to the cosmopolitanism of a foreign concession in the Far East.

Tien-tsin is the biggest open port in North China and the third in rank in point of activity and commerce in the whole Celestial Empire. It is, moreover, an immense Chinese city of nearly a million inhabitants, but its European concession is very inferior to that of Shanghai, and as a native city it is of little interest in comparison with Peking, Canton and many other towns. It is from here that travellers used, in former times, to begin the disagreeable journey to the capital, either on horseback or by junk up the Pei-ho. The river route was usually performed partly by sail and partly by oar, but occasionally the boat had to be towed by men. The junks took two or three days to ascend the sinuous course of the river. Sometimes, however, when the wind was to the north, and the shoals numerous, the journey occupied from four to five days before Peking was reached. Now the daily express, which speeds along at the rate of twenty miles an hour, takes three hours and fifty-three minutes to cover the ground which separates Tien-tsin from the station at Peking.

The country through which it passes is very flat, and it is only just before arriving at its terminus that the blue outline of some rather high hills come into sight towards the north-

east. In the month of September, when the rains are over and are replaced by a drought that lasts until the end of winter, the environs of Tien-tsin, including the cemetery, are entirely under water, and as we looked from the train window, we could see a coffin floating about, and another like gruesome object stuck on the embankment of the line, which led us to reflect that, though the Chinese make such a fuss over their ancestors, they apparently care very little for their graves. The inundation at first stretched as far as the eye could see. Presently the land began to peep out. If you expect to find the soil from which the waters have just retired uncultivated, it will only be an evident proof that you know very little about the indefatigable industry of the Chinese agriculturist, and the great care and skill which he brings to his task. All that emerges has already been carefully sown, even down to the very brink of the water, and at a few steps from the limits of the inundation, the future harvest which has sprang up under the hot September sun from the moist but rich soil begins to make its appearance. The mud villages now succeed each other rapidly, and presently the traveller reaches an admirably cultivated country where not an inch of soil is wasted, and where the wheat and sorghum fields are alternated by kitchen gardens and orchards.

The temporary station at Peking, built of planks and galvanized iron, stands in the midst of this landscape. Very little is to be seen of the high walls of the city, which are almost entirely hidden by trees, and by a slight rising in the land. Nothing indicates that the gates of the capital of the oldest Empire in the world are so near. In order to traverse the mile which separates the station from the entrance to Peking, it is necessary to exchange the most highly perfected of human conveyance for the most barbaric. The Chinese are unwilling that the stranger should dispense, in order to enter their most holy capital, with a thorough jolting in their national carriage, unto which the Siberian tarantass may be compared as the most luxurious of vehicles. Two enormous wheels, covered with iron and garnished with a triple row of nails, support this shapeless waggon, which is protected by a blue awning, and is dragged along by two mules harnessed one in front of the other. Whilst the driver sits in front under the awning, the hapless traveller has to accommodate himself on the floor, with his legs stretched out in front of him.

Now begins the torture, for one is literally jolted about against the wooden sides of the cart like a pill in a box. Presently the wheel goes over a huge stone, only to fall into a deep hole, or stick in a rut. Meanwhile, the diabolical waggon behaves in a most abominable manner, to the unutterable agony of its wretched inmate, who lives in terror of being either precipitated into the mud, or of having his brains knocked out by the collapse of the whole structure. Of this latter catastrophe there is little or no likelihood, for about the only good quality this appalling conveyance can boast of is solidity: nothing could break it. About twenty minutes after leaving the station a high battlemented wall, surrounded by a mud-filled moat, is reached. Next, you pass over a bridge, beyond which a gate admits into a sort of half-moon surrounded by walls, beyond which is yet another gate admitting to the city proper, where, after another hour's jolting, the unhappy traveller alights at a hotel in Legation Street kept by a Frenchman.

Although not the most ancient city in the Celestial Empire, Peking is an epitome of the rest of China, together with its ancient civilization and its present stagnation and decadence. It belongs to a very different type from the cities of Europe, or even of the Moslem world, and the sight of its immense wall and successive enclosures, which divide it into four distinct parts, reminds one of Nineveh or Babylon. In the centre is the 'Forbidden' or 'Purple City,' about a league in length from north to south, and a quarter of a league in width, containing the palaces of the Emperor and Empress Dowager, and the gardens and the residences of a swarm of parasites numbering, it is said, between six or eight thousand persons, inclusive of guards, concubines, eunuchs, functionaries, gardeners and other attendants upon the Imperial harem. The only Europeans who are allowed to cross the sacred threshold of the Purple City are the members of the Diplomatic Corps, to whom the Emperor gives audience on New Year's Day, as well as since quite recently on the occasions of their arrival or taking leave. Around the Purple City extends the Imperial City, its walls painted pink, which in its turn is surrounded by the Tatar City, a rectangle of 4 miles in length, by 3 miles in width, whose sides face the cardinal points. Its colossal walls are 50 feet high, and at their summit are 50 feet wide. Their external fronts consist of two strong brick walls, rising from a substructure of stone. The interior

is filled up with earth, and the summit, covered with flagstones, forms a walk bordered by embattled stone parapets. Bastions project outwards, and huge pavilions built of brick, pierced with many balustraria, and coated with highly varnished coloured tiles, ornament its four corners and gates. It rises only 99 feet above the ground, beyond which height it is never allowed to build, lest the flight of the good spirits might be inconvenienced thereby. This magnificent rampart, which to the north-east and to the west rises abruptly from the midst of the country, Peking having no suburbs, presents a most imposing aspect; and it is not less impressive when beheld from any one of the half-moons, which are very vast, and are built before the various gates, but which, owing to the height of the embattled walls which surround them on all sides, each of which is surmounted by a massive brick pavilion, look like wells.

To the south of the Tatar City is a group of less imposing walls surrounding the lengthy rectangle which includes the Chinese City, the commercial part of Peking. The broad street that intersects it from north to south, and cuts it into two equal parts, especially close to the Tsieng-Men Gate, by which you pass into the Tatar City, is the most animated artery of the city. In the central walk, paved with magnificent flag-stones, not one of which is now in its right place, and which apparently only serve as stumbling-blocks to pedestrians, and are covered with mud a foot deep in summer, and by a pestilential dust in winter, circulate in the utmost confusion the ever-present waggons, already described, palanquins, sedan-chairs, whose colours vary with the dignity of the owner, chairs drawn by mules, men riding on small Manchurian ponies, indefatigable asses, which are the best means of locomotion in the place, enormous one-wheeled barrows, coolies struggling under the burden of huge baskets filled with fruit, vegetables, and other comestibles, fixed to the end of a very long pole slung across their shoulders—all this busy world bustles along, filling the air with shouts and cries of every kind, from the croaking of the porters to the stentorian shouts of the waggoners. Occasionally a long string of huge two-humped camels, a cord running from the nostrils of one animal to the tail of the other, and led by a Mongolian urchin, adds to the incredible confusion. All this crowd, together with beasts and vehicles, has to content itself with what, under ordinary circumstances, would

be a very broad roadway, if at least a third of it were not encumbered by a sort of permanent open-air fair, carried on in rows of booths, some of which are used as restaurants, others as shops of every description. These booths turn their backs to the middle of the street, and thus hide the line of shops beyond, of which, from the centre of the road, you can only perceive the enormous and innumerable sign-boards hanging from a veritable forest of gaily-painted poles.

Beyond the Tsieng-Men Gate is situated the Beggars' Bridge, always thronged by groups of wretches clamouring for alms and ostentatiously displaying the most appalling mutilations, with all kinds of loathsome diseases added to their sordid misery to excite compassion. The narrow side-walks, which are bordered on the one hand by booths, and on the other by big shops, are filled by a motley gathering of small shopkeepers, each plying his business in the open air—barbers, hair-dressers, and fortune-tellers, among whom the crowd has no little difficulty in threading its way. Here you see men in light-blue blouses, with long pigtails ; Chinese ladies with their hair dragged back magpie-tail fashion, who balance themselves painfully as they go along on their tiny deformed feet ; Tatar women, whose hair is puffed out on each side of their faces, and who, like their Chinese sisters, stick a big flower behind their ears. Not being crippled by bound feet, like their less fortunate Chinese sisters, these women strut along with as firm a step as their high-heeled clogs will permit. Their faces are bedaubed with rice-flour, and their cheeks painted an alarmingly bright red. Children with their heads shaved in the most comical manner, dotted about with little tufts, that have a very funny appearance, being cut according to the taste or caprice of their parents, also run about. Among the well-clad children of a better class are others, stark-naked, looking for all the world like small animated bronzes, so dark and warm-coloured, is their polished skin. In order to avoid being mobbed, one has occasionally to seek refuge in a shop, which usually opens on to the street, and is without windows. In the back the shopkeepers are peacefully seated behind their counters smoking long pipes, whilst exhibiting their goods and listening to the bargainings of their customers. These shops are always very clean, and the goods are arranged with great order and even considerable taste. A bowl with goldfish, or a cage full of birds, adds not a little to the charm and peacefulness of the

scene, which is peculiarly refreshing after the noise and dirt of the streets.

All the great arteries of Peking are equally filthy and closely resemble each other, excepting that not one of them can equal, either in the size of the shops or wealth of their contents, the famous High Street that leads to the Tsieng-Men Gate. In summer, after the rains, a coating of mud some two feet and a half deep covers both road and footpath, which when the weather dries again is converted into thick clouds of dust. The sideways, always lower than the central road, are usually filled by pools of green water, whence arises the most horrible stench of decayed vegetables and rotting carcasses of animals, in addition to the accumulated offal of the neighbouring houses. The wonder of it all is that the entire population of Peking has not long since been swept away by some appalling epidemic.

Leaving aside the few broad streets, one frequently comes across immense open spaces, whose centres are generally occupied by a huge dunghill. The narrow little streets that branch out in all directions can be divided into two classes—those which border on the three or four principal commercial thoroughfares, which, like them, are lined with shops, but are scarcely broad enough to allow of the passage of a single cart, although they are thronged from morning to night by a seething, noisy crowd; and the silent and deadly dull private streets, where the dwelling-houses are to be found. On either side runs a gray wall, whose monotony is broken at intervals by a series of shabby little doors. If any one of these happens to be open, one can only perceive from the street a small courtyard a few feet square, and another dead wall, beyond which is the inner courtyard, shut off from all observation, and on which open all the windows of these singular dwellings, not one of which is more than one story high, and always protected by a gray double-tiled roof, usually ornamented at the four corners by some grotesque stone beast or other, but never turned up at the ends as are invariably those of the temples and the monuments. There is no movement whatever in these streets. A few children play before the doors, a dog or so strays about in the road, and now and again a coolie or an itinerant merchant, with two baskets suspended from a pole across his shoulders, breaks the silence by a shrill cry; sometimes a donkey or a cart passes along but fails to enliven the

deadly quiet of the street, which is so still and monotonous that one might almost imagine one's self in a village instead of in one of the most populous cities in the world.

The scene changes entirely when Peking is seen from the heights of the walls which form the only agreeable promenade in the capital, to whose summits ascends neither the mud nor the stench of this dirtiest of cities. The eye wanders pleasantly over a forest of fine trees, for every house has one or two in its courtyard, and barely a glimpse of the offensive streets is to be had: only the gray roofs of the little houses; and thus Peking looks for all the world like an immense park, from whose midst rise the yellow roofs of the Imperial Palace, and to the northern extremity of the city, a wooded height called the Coal Mountain, surmounted by a pagoda.

As to monuments, there are very few in Peking worth the seeing, and into these foreigners are never allowed to enter. Twenty-five or thirty years ago visitors were admitted into a great number of the temples: that of Heaven, which is now being restored, and where the Emperor goes annually to make a sacrifice, and the Temples of the Sun, the Moon, and of Agriculture, and they were even allowed to peep into the Imperial Gardens; but since the entry of the Anglo-French troops into Peking, in 1860, the Chinese have been very reticent with respect to their monuments, doubtless a consequence of the salutary lesson they then received, which they are philosophical enough to endeavour to forget, as all wise folk should do things that wound their pride. To-day the people affect to believe the official story invented on that occasion to save appearances, wherein it was stated that the Emperor Hien-feng, instead of fleeing before the allies, merely went on a hunting excursion in his park at Johol in Mongolia. Their usual insolence towards foreigners had completely returned, to be modified, however, so soon as they heard of the successes of the Japanese, and they were seized with absolute terror at the prospect of beholding the Mikado's army marching through their gates.

When I was in Peking in the autumn of 1897 Europeans were very rarely insulted in the streets. Before the War it was otherwise, and I myself, like many another, did not escape the impertinence of the Chinese at Canton. All the same, they took good care to close their monuments to the inspection of the 'foreign devils,' and the only temple now open for our inspec-

tion is that of Confucius, an immense but rather commonplace hall with a steep roof supported on pillars painted a vivid red. Foreigners are also permitted to visit the place where the literati undergo their examinations. It consists of some thousands of little cells lining several long, open corridors, wherein the unfortunate candidates for law and medicine are shut for several days while they answer the questions set them. Then there is the old Observatory, wherein are two series of highly useful instruments. The first dates from the time of the Mongol Dynasty in the thirteenth century, and lies scattered half buried among the weeds at the bottom of the courtyard; the second series is less antiquated, having been made under the direction of the Jesuit Verbiest, who was astronomer to the Emperor of China in the early part of the seventeenth century. They are shown on the walls. After seeing these thoroughly up-to-date astronomical instruments, one has visited all there is to be seen in the Imperial city of Peking.

It must be confessed, however, that walking in the streets, or at the foot or on top of the enormous walls, is far more interesting and instructive than visiting temples and palaces. At every step the observer is struck with the activity and energy of the Chinese people in contradistinction to the systematic stagnation of its governing classes, and he soon comes to the conclusion that China is in a state of decadence strongly resembling in many details that of the Roman Empire at the time of the invasions of the Barbarians. This erstwhile magnificent capital is now only the shadow of its former self. The number of its inhabitants, 700,000 to 800,000, is gradually decreasing, and many houses are already in ruins. Some of the best streets, which must at one time have been splendidly paved, are now almost impassable, the result of neglect; drains, which at one time were covered in, now run open through the streets, and are choked up by nameless deposits which are never removed, and even immense blocks of the celebrated walls are occasionally allowed to crumble to ruin. Now and again an effort to repair them is started, but as half the money intended for the work usually remains in the hands of the officials and contractors it is never well done, great care being taken not to do the repairs thoroughly, for fear of preventing fresh disaster and losing a chance to do it all over again. On the other hand, on the rare occasions when the Emperor betakes himself and his court to some summer residence or other, or to make a

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sacrifice at one of the temples, things are furbished up a bit, to make him believe that his capital is well looked after. The ruts and the mud-heaps in the streets through which the procession passes are hidden under a thick coating of sand, and everything likely to offend the eye of the Son of Heaven is covered over; even the miserable booths which encumber the streets are removed, and the half-moons in the rampart have their walls painted white, but only so high as the Imperial eyes may be lifted as His Celestial Majesty passes by, lolling back indolently in his magnificent palanquin.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNTRY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF PEKING — NUMEROUS SIGNS OF THE DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

From Peking to the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall of China--The temples in the hills—Striking neglect of monuments and public works—Remains of ancient and well-paved highroads, now replaced by wretched ones, which are only temporarily repaired when the Emperor or the Empress Dowager passes—The manner in which useful works are neglected in China, and her treasure wasted.

A TOUR in the environs of Peking, to the Great Wall and to some of the temples built on the hills to the west of the town, confirms the bad impressions received in the city. This excursion occupies between three and four days, and can be performed with relative comfort, and in ordinary times without the least danger. A 'boy,' that is to say, a domestic servant — a combination of guide, interpreter, valet and cook, and who is often, by the way, a very expert disciple of Vatel—a donkey and donkey-boy, a waggon, drawn by two mules, and a waggoner, are the staff necessary for this journey, which is usually performed partly on foot and partly on donkey-back. This suite may be considered somewhat numerous, but no other human being but his own master would get a Chinese donkey to budge a step forward, and the same may be said of the mules. As to the 'boy,' he is the indispensable party into whose hands you must trust yourself absolutely, even to the extent of handing over your purse, so that he may settle your accounts at the various inns and give the expected backsheesh to the servants or to the guides and bonzes in the temples. Needless to say, he perfectly understands how to take care of himself in the matter of reserving for his own benefit the 'squeeze,' as they say in pigeon-English. All Europeans who travel in the Far East are obliged to have a retinue, which adds to their importance, and in which every man has his particular function

to fulfil, and will not undertake the least share of his fellow-servants' work.

On leaving Peking by the Northern Gate, one crosses a sandy and barren space, occupied in the thirteenth century by a part of the town, which has now disappeared. Then come some outlying towns, mainly inhabited by merchants, succeeded by the admirably cultivated plain which extends from the north of Peking to the foot of the hills. It is more barren to the south, and trees only grow close to the villages, which are invariably surrounded by groups of weeping-willows. In this region the soil and the climate are too dry to allow of the cultivation of rice, but a crop of winter wheat is obtained, and I have seen it sown, and even appearing above the ground, in the month of October. It does not freeze in the very dry earth, although the thermometer falls twenty degrees, and the snow is never very deep. This crop of wheat is harvested during May. Presently you see fields of sorghum, millet, the staple food of the people in these parts, and also of buckwheat. On all sides the peasantry are hard at work, usually alongside strong waggons, better built than those of the Siberian mujiks, and drawn either by two mules or two horses, or sometimes by three little donkeys. In the villages you can sometimes see the grain thrashed or the long leaves of the sorghum being bound in sheaves, which when dried are made into mats and screens. The women help in the latter work, which invariably takes place close to their doors, for they are never seen in the fields. The roads are generally very bad, but have not always been so. Many of the bridges are still in a superb condition, although the fine flagstones with which they are paved are in a shocking condition. Others, however, are in absolute ruin, and the rivers which they once spanned have consequently to be forded. Everything points to the fact that we are passing over a once magnificent highroad, and effectively it leads to the Tombs of the Mings, which explains why it was built in such a sumptuous manner by that Dynasty, as well as the state of abandonment into which it has fallen since it has come into the hands of the Manchus, who de-throned the Mings in 1644.

Very few places that I have ever visited have produced upon me a greater impression of grandeur than the amphitheatre formed by the lofty hills on whose last slopes stand the Tombs of the thirteen Emperors of the Ming Dynasty. Each of these

monuments is formed of an aggregation of buildings shaded by magnificent trees, that present a striking contrast to the usual gray barrenness of Chinese hills. The broad road which leads to them, once paved but now in ruins, passes under a superb triumphal arch into the silent valley, which seems deserted, although in reality it is highly cultivated; the little villages clustering at the foot of the heights, too, are, as a rule, difficult to make out. After passing under numerous elegant gateways, supported by winged columns, we at length arrive at a gigantic alley of colossal monoliths, representing figures of animals and monsters alternately sitting and crouching, and statues of famous legislators and warriors. Roads radiate towards each of the Tombs, of which I only visited that of the first Ming Emperor who reigned in Peking.

After having passed through a high wall by a porch with three badly-kept gates, we crossed a spacious courtyard planted with trees, and presently entered the great hall. Before the whole length of the façade extends several flights of marble steps with exquisitely sculptured balustrades. The hall itself is not less than 200 feet long by about 80 feet wide and 40 feet in height. It is nearly empty, and at first you can only perceive the forty gigantic wooden columns, each formed of the trunk of a tree, that support the roof, and which two men cannot embrace. These columns are said to have come from the confines of Indo-China. In the midst of them, half hidden away, is a small altar, ornamented with a few commonplace china vases, which are crumbling to pieces and full of dust. Beyond the altar, enclosed in a sort of tabernacle, is the tablet inscribed with the deceased Emperor's name in three Chinese characters. His body lies beyond, at the end of a gallery a mile long, which penetrates straight into the heart of the hill, but is walled up a short distance from the entrance, which one reaches through two courtyards separated by a portico. From the lofty tower that rises over this entrance, the walls of which, by the way, are embellished with names which numerous Chinese and a few Europeans have been vulgar enough to scratch on the walls with the points of their knives, the view includes the whole semicircle of hills, as well as all the Tombs, which, by reason of the very simplicity of their design, create an impression of extreme grandeur. Their erection must have cost as great an amount of labour as that which was bestowed by the Egyptians upon the sepulchres of their Pharaohs.

The Great Wall of China is another colossal undertaking, in order to reach which you take the high road to Mongolia that passes through the Pa-ta-ling Gate at the extremity of the pass of Nan-kow. This highroad, which for centuries has been daily traversed by long caravans of camels, engaged in the traffic between Mongolia, Siberia, and China, was formerly paved with blocks of granite, of which no trace is now to be seen, either on that part of the road in the little town of Nan-kow, or in the difficult mountain pass, and the traveller may therefore conclude that they have either been used in the construction of houses or washed away by some torrent. Nan-kow is a walled town, like almost all those in the neighbourhood of Peking, including the curious old suburb of Chao-yung-kwan, over one of the doors of which there is an inscription in six languages, one of which has not yet been deciphered. Everywhere on the mountain sides towers and picturesque ruins of fortifications manifest how great has ever been the fear of the Chinese of the Tatars and Mongols, for protection against whom the Great Wall was built. It is divided into two parts, the inner and the outer wall, the first of which extends for nearly 1,560 miles, from Shan-hai-kwan on the Gulf of Pe-chi-li into the Province of Kan-su on the upper Yellow River. Built two hundred years before our era, needless to say, it has been often repaired and rebuilt. Near the sea it is constructed of stone, but brick has been used on the inland portions. In thickness it varies from 16 feet to 20 feet, and is about the same in height, but to the west it is nothing like so lofty.

The inner wall, which dates from the sixth century, was almost entirely reconstructed by the Mings in the sixteenth century, and is 500 miles long. This is the wall to be seen from Pa-ta-ling, passing over the hill, and then proceeding right and left to climb in zigzag fashion to the very summit of the mountains. It is constructed after the model of the walls of Peking, on a substructure of stone, with two rows of brick battlements. The top is paved, and forms a roadway 11 feet in width. Its height varies, according to the irregularity of the land, between 12 feet and 20 feet, and at about every 300 feet there are towers twice the height of the wall, also surrounded by bastions and battlements. Although less imposing than the Wall of Peking, the Great Wall of China does not deserve the flippant remarks that have been made about it. Against an enemy unprovided with artillery, and horsemen like the Mongols

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and 'tatars, it must have presented a very serious obstruction, and if occasionally they have been able to scale it, it has generally resisted every attempt at invasion. Although it has not been used under the present Dynasty, which is of Tatar origin, it has remained, thanks to the care bestowed upon it in former times, one of the best preserved monuments in China.

It is otherwise with the greater number of the temples scattered over the hills, which stand amidst groups of magnificent trees, whose green foliage contrasts so pleasantly with the gray, barren hills which the Chinese, like all other peoples of the Far East, never cultivate. Visitors are pleasantly received in the temples near Peking, some of which are used as summer residences by European diplomatists tired of being shut up in the city, whose pestilential miasmas occasionally reach even their houses, although they are surrounded by parks. Some of them are only wooden structures, with dwellings for the bonzes surrounding courtyards on to which open the various sanctuaries. The use of wood in the Far East for building purposes does not prevent a certain display of magnificence and art, and the Japanese temples at Nikko and many other places are marvels of richness and beauty, although they are entirely built of wood. Unfortunately, unless they are very carefully looked after, they are naturally apt to deteriorate much quicker than stone buildings. Needless to say, the Chinese temples are in a very dilapidated condition. I cannot say that I was impressed by the amazing collection of Buddhas, some life-size, others colossal, some gilded and others painted, no two of which are said to be exactly alike ; or by the crowd of horrible monsters with ferocious faces and abominable gestures who guard the entrances to these temples. They one and all filled me rather with disgust than with the slightest impression of awe. This degenerate Buddhism is very different from that which exists in Ceylon, and among certain Japanese sects. The only traces of the original character of the religion, or at any rate of the land from which it sprang, are to be found in the lovely stone pagoda of the Pi-Yuen-Sse, whose style is pure Hindu, and contains some exquisite bas-reliefs representing scenes in the lives of Sakyamuni and his saints, or, again, in the even more beautiful sculpture to be admired in the Temple of the Yellow Tower.

The Summer Palace, which, by the way, was not a genuine Chinese building, but erected under the direction of the Jesuits

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in the eighteenth century in the style of Versailles, has not been rebuilt since its destruction by the Allies in 1860, and all access to its ruins has been prohibited. Not far distant is the summer residence of the Empress Dowager, surrounded by magnificent gardens. The road which leads to it is well kept. For the matter of that, as the Empress was about to make a pilgrimage to a neighbouring shrine at the time I passed that way, all the roads were being tinkered up for her advent. Hundreds of coolies were working under the direction of mandarins of the second or inferior rank, with the white or gold button, who were dashing on horseback hither and thither, giving orders and generally superintending so that all irregularities were rapidly disappearing under cartloads of sand. These costly repairs were, however, only ephemeral.

The Chinese Government never hesitates about wasting money on trivialities. On one occasion, a river happening to upset certain arrangements in one of the Imperial gardens, it was, at enormous cost, drained from its bed, and allowed to inundate and ruin hundreds of farms belonging to the unfortunate peasants. On another occasion, with a view to worthily celebrating the sixtieth birthday of the Dowager Empress, the money intended for the reorganization of the army in Pe-chi-li was squandered on processions, illuminations, and fireworks. Whenever money is needed for anything but the gratification of the greed and vanity of the Court officials, it is never forthcoming ; and every traveller who has been to China will corroborate what I have said concerning not only the neighbourhood of Peking, but also of Canton and Shanghai. The highroads have practically ceased to exist, and the bridges are rapidly crumbling to ruin. The Imperial canal, one of the most magnificent works of past generations, which goes from Hang-Chow to Tien-tsin, a distance of over 940 miles, and unites the Blue, the Yellow, and the Pei-ho Rivers, and also the capitals of the middle provinces, whence are obtained the best provisions, is now at many points choked up with sand and stones, and in others it is only a few inches deep, and can only be used for local traffic. China of to-day is but a shadow of what she has been, for her sole object in existence is to deceive, and her administration is rotten to the core. This decadence dates centuries back, but it culminated five years ago, when an Empire of 400,000,000 inhabitants was obliged to humble itself to a nation ten times its inferior in population and resources.

CHAPTER IV

THE LITERARY AND MANDARIN CLASS—PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF THE DECADENCE OF THE EMPIRE

The literati or governing class—How it is recruited from the mass of the people through examinations—Bachelors, Masters of Arts and Doctors—Enormous number of candidates—The functionaries exclusively selected from the literati—Most of the posts sold—The syndicate for the exploitation of public offices—The gravest defect of the system, the examinations, the subjects selected being merely exercises in rhetoric and memory about an immense quantity of nonsensical matter supplied by the Chinese classics and ancient annals—Abortive attempts to introduce small doses of Western science into these examinations—Superstitions of the literati—This stupid system of examination the principal cause of Chinese isolation—Complete disappearance of the military spirit resulting from the same fatal cause—Hostility and contempt entertained by the literati against all European progress—Difficulty of suppressing or reforming the mandarin class.

THE curse of China and the main reason why her remarkable people, who once deserved to be compared with the ancient Romans, have sunk to the degraded condition in which we find them at present, is the mandarin class, which she has the misfortune to consider one of her chief glories. It is this corrupt and antiquated system that is destroying the Celestial Empire. It has often been observed that nations generally have the Government they deserve, and it is undoubtedly true that the administration of China is, in a measure, the logical result of her geographical situation and singular history, to which might be added the peculiar character of her people. On the other hand, there is no question that the worst traits of the national character are accentuated in the mandarin class which governs the country, and saps its activity and energy.

Theoretically, the Chinese Government is based on paternal principles; as a matter of fact, it is entirely in the hands of the class known as 'literati,' from whose ranks all the State

officials, or mandarins, are recruited ; and if we wish to understand the primary causes of the misgovernment of the Celestial Empire, we must become thoroughly acquainted with the origin and manners of the mandarins, who are not hereditary, but recruited from the mass of the people in the most democratic manner in the world by means of public competitive examinations. These examinations confer three honorary degrees, which might be likened to those bestowed by our Universities : Bachelors, Masters of Arts, and Doctors. The degree of Bachelor is competed for in each district (there are sixty districts per province), and that of Master of Arts in the eighteen provincial capitals ; that of Doctor, on the other hand, is only to be obtained in Peking. One may imagine the esteem in which these degrees are held by the people when I mention that in 1897, when I was at Shanghai, no less than 14,000 candidates came up for examination at Nan-king, with only 150 honours to be distributed amongst them. It is considered a great honour for a family to include a literate amongst its members, and his obtaining his degree is celebrated throughout the entire province which enjoys the privilege of being his birthplace. Should he be fortunate enough to obtain his laureate at Peking, he is welcomed on his return to his native town as a veritable conquering hero. It is quite true that, in order to pass his examination, he has to go through an amount of physical suffering and patient endurance which would deter any but a Chinaman from the attempt. Each candidate is shut up for three whole days in a box-like cell four feet square, in which he cannot even lie down, with no other companions than his brush, paper and stick of Chinese ink ; and barely an examination passes without some student or other being found dead in his cell. According to popular rumour, it is said that the all-pervading corruption penetrates even into these cells, and that not a few candidates succeed less through their merits than through the golden gate ; and it has even been observed that the sons and near relatives of existing high functionaries are pretty sure to pass ; but as a rule, however, it seems that merit generally obtains its reward. It is, however, after the examinations that begin the real difficulties of those who are not rich and are without influential friends. One might naturally expect that after the trouble, fatigue, and expense of the examination were over, some post or other would surely be forthcoming to recompense the efforts of the candidate ; but the contrary

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is the rule, and many a man has had to wait a lifetime before obtaining the reward for which he has striven so hard. Nevertheless, those students who seem to possess exceptional ability generally push themselves forward in the following manner: a syndicate has been formed which advances the funds necessary to assist the aspirant in mounting the first rung on the ladder of fame, and to help him further, until he is in a position to return the money borrowed, either in cash or kind, with a very handsome interest. The idea of exploiting public offices as a sort of commercial concern is, to say the least, ingenious, and, what is more, it seems to be occasionally exceedingly remunerative. On the other hand, the expense and the intrigue that such a pernicious system must necessarily involve can better be imagined than described. As an instance in point, I was assured that the position of Tao-tai or Governor of Shanghai, worth, for not more than three years, a salary of 6,000 taels, or £900, a year, was recently bought for over £30,000.

Even worse than the purchase of public offices, and the favouritism shown at examinations, are the subjects chosen for competition, which are exclusively selected from Chinese classical and scholastic literature. The works of Confucius, those of his disciples, of Mencius and of other philosophers who enlightened the world two thousand years ago, and a mass of quaint lore derived from the ancient Chinese chronicles, form the subject of these extraordinary examinations, and the students have to learn some hundred volumes as nearly as possible by heart, memory being the one thing most highly prized by the Board of Examiners. The student is expected to quote certain extracts word by word as they appear in the books, and his examination papers must, moreover, be embellished by a great quantity of quotations—the more the better. An elegant style is obtained only through acquaintance with as many of the 60,000 Chinese characters as possible, from which the student is expected to make an appropriate selection, and, as each sign means a word, and not a few of these are almost unknown, and only to be found in some hidden corner of an ancient volume, the waste of time is appalling. The preparatory instruction, therefore, simply consists in cramming the wretched candidate with a knowledge of as great a number of signs or characters, and quotations from the Celestial classics, as possible. One of the most curious features of the Chinese is that, although everybody knows how to read and write a little,

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no one can do so perfectly, for the simple reason that no Chinaman has ever been known to completely master the voluminous alphabet of his country. The most ignorant has acquired some ten or a dozen characters relating to his trade, and sufficient for his purpose. When a man has mastered 6,000 or 8,000 he is considered learned, and, when we come to think of it, there must be very few ideas that cannot be expressed by so many thousands of words. Many of the higher literati manage to acquire even 20,000 words, and the state of the mind of that man may safely be left to the reader's imagination, especially if we reflect that he must have passed his entire youth studying by rote thousands of signs only distinguishable from one another by the minutest strokes, and in acquiring a prodigious amount of obsolete knowledge from classical books and annals whose authors lived in remote antiquity. Of late years a slight modification has been introduced in the shape of certain concessions to what is officially called the 'new Western culture.' To the usual questions selected from the works of Confucius and other philosophers have now been added the identification of names mentioned in modern geography, and since the Chino-Japanese War the examiners at Nan-king ask their candidates some very grave and informing queries in astronomy, as: 'What is the apparent diameter of the sun as seen from the earth? and what would be that of the earth as seen from the sun or from some other planet?' The following sage question is typical of the intellectual condition of both examiner and examined: 'Why is the character in writing which represents the moon closed at the bottom, and the one which represents the sun left open?'

In the capital of a province near Shanghai the learned examiners wished to encourage the study of mathematics, and, accordingly, prizes were offered for competition and a solemn circular sent out to encourage young men to take part in the examination. Some young fellows, who had been educated in the missionary schools, solved most of the problems offered fairly well, and in accordance with the rules of modern elementary education. Others, on the other hand, who were better acquainted with the Four Books and the Five Great Classics than with Western geometry, made the remarkable discovery that the problems were explained in an old work written many centuries ago, with the result that they simply copied word by

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word the fantastical solutions therein formulated, and, of course, carried off the prizes. In the following year one of the professors of a foreign missionary college asked leave for a competent European teacher to be included in the examining committee in order to assist in the preparation of the papers and to pronounce a verdict upon the answers sent in. Needless to say, the demand was refused and the questions were sent out without the least attempt to insure their being loyally answered. Among the questions asked at a competitive scientific examination in Chekiang in 1898 were the following: 'How are foreign candles made, and in what consists their superiority over those manufactured in China?' 'Name the principal ports touched at by the steamers running between Japan and the Mediterranean.' 'To which of the new sciences and methods which people are endeavouring to introduce should the greatest importance be attached?' 'Write an essay on international law.' Comment is needless.

These foolish innovations, of course, do not change the fundamental scholastic and rhetorical character of Chinese examinations, and the usual themes for the compositions remain identical. Here are two examples quoted by Mr. Henry Norman: 'Confucius hath said, "In what majesty did Chun and Yu reign over the Empire, as though the Empire was as nothing unto them!" Confucius hath said, "Yao was verily a great sovereign. How glorious he was! Heaven alone is grand, and Yao only worthy to enter it. How exalted was his virtue! The people could find no words wherewith to qualify it."'* This was the theme that had to be developed by many a flower of rhetoric. It is only through the study of these books, written twenty centuries ago, and encumbered by parables and affected maxims, and of ancient annals crammed with fantastic legends believed in as absolute facts, that are selected the members of the class who are expected to govern China!

The result of this method of education was exemplified as late as 1897, two years after a war which had brought the Celestial Empire within an inch of ruin, when a censor, one of the highest officials in the Empire, addressed a document to the Emperor, wherein he protested against the concessions made to the inventions of the Western barbarians, which he

* 'Politics and Peoples of the Far East.' London: Fisher Unwin. 1895.

did not hesitate to qualify as calculated to disturb the peace of the dead. Instead of constructing railways, he gravely insisted, it were wiser to offer a handsome reward to the man who should recover the secret of making flying chariots to be drawn by phoenixes which certainly existed in the good old times. A little time previously a member of the Tsung-li-Yamen had lifted his voice to protest against the various railway embankments and the nails that studded the lines, which, he believed, were likely to inconvenience and wound the sacred dragons who protect the cities of the Empire, and who dwell beneath the soil. The strange superstitions of the *fengshui* geomancy dealing with the circulation through the air of good and evil spirits, and with the prescribed height to which buildings may be erected, and the exact positions of doors and other like grave matters, which, it seems, unless they be properly attended to, are apt to upset and offend the flying spirits in their progress through space, exercise a greater empire over the minds of Chinese officials in the very highest places than matters which we should consider of the greatest importance.

The fact that the mandarinat is recruited from the democracy renders it even more pernicious than if it constituted a hereditary aristocracy, for, as it stands, nobody has any interest in overthrowing it. The most intelligent people try to enter it, and it attracts all the most gifted men in the Empire, but only to corrupt them. The literary class enjoys an enormous prestige, and the poorest man lives in the hope of seeing his son one of its learned members. It, therefore, does not excite any of that hatred usually provoked by caste privilege, and thus does not stand the least danger of being upset. On the other hand, the condition to which it has reduced the Celestial Empire is a condemnation of the system of examination for Government office, and many a Western State might do well to study this question and to take its lesson to heart. That its effects have been more accentuated in China than elsewhere is undeniable, being the result of diverse historic and ethnographical circumstances peculiar to that nation. The Chinese reached a high state of civilization long before our era, and being more numerous and intelligent than their neighbours, so soon as they were cemented into one compact nationality they proceeded to subjugate Indo-China and Korea; and so it came to pass that China had no dangerous foes to disturb her, Japan being isolated in her island Empire,

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and she was separated from India by a formidable mountain barrier and from the West by immense deserts. From that time the Chinese had nothing to trouble them, and had but to live in quiet admiration of the labours of their ancestors, who were the authors of the perfect peace which they enjoyed, and thus little by little they accustomed themselves to look upon them as superior beings and as types of perfection. More advanced than any of their tributary subjects, and having nothing to fear from competition, they became lost in self-admiration, or, rather, in the admiration of those who had made their country what it was, and ended by believing that no further progress was either necessary or possible, and thus are now absolutely non-progressive.

The isolation and the want of emulation in which China has existed for so many centuries have destroyed whatever energy and initiative she might otherwise have possessed. It should be remarked, however, that the Roman Empire was in very much the same condition, and for the same reason, at the time of the invasion of the Barbarians, and that outside the moral revolution effected by Christianity—which, by the way, only obtained its fullest developments by the overthrow of the Empire—no further progress was being made. The sterile admiration of bygone greatness, therefore, is the foundation-stone of the doctrines of Confucius. The Chinese people, who are essentially practical and positive, and less given, perhaps, than any other in the world to study general questions and lofty ideals, soon deteriorated under so retrogressive a system, and eventually lost all sight of the origin of many of their most important institutions. Religion and morals were reduced to mere rites and ceremonies that only conceal the emptiness of Chinese civilization, and so the nation came to the conclusion that the one thing in this world worth the doing was to save appearances, and conceal corruption beneath a flimsy mask.

The isolation of China and her superiority over her neighbours produced another very grave consequence—the ruin of that martial spirit which has obliterated all idea of duty and sacrifice. The military mandarins are despised by their civil colleagues, and their tests consist almost exclusively of physical exercises such as archery and the lifting of heavy weights. ‘One does not use good iron to make nails, nor a good man to make a soldier,’ says the Chinese proverb, and thus it is that the Chinese army is recruited from a horde of blackguards

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and plunderers, whose only good qualities are their contempt for life and physical endurance, which might under proper management turn this raw material into an excellent army.

The Celestial Empire is quite as incapable of resisting the advance of modern civilization as it is of assimilating it. From the literati who govern the land nothing is to be expected, for they will neither learn nor forget anything. Their prejudices are so strong as to prevent their accepting any great movement of reform, even if it were in their interests, and in the stagnant position in which China is at present, aided by the lack of intercommunication between the provinces, the mandarins do exactly as they please. The *Peking Gazette*, the official paper, described quite recently in the most glowing terms the suppression of a revolt, showing at the same time the expenses incurred and the rewards offered to those who had aided in its suppression. The real truth of the story was that no revolution whatever had taken place in the district mentioned, and the only unusual event which had occurred was the pursuit of a runaway thief by three soldiers. Such an instance could not possibly occur in a well-regulated State, and naturally the men who profited by the lie will not be very desirous of a change in so profitable a system. 'Those who despair most of China are those who know her best,' once said a missionary to me; and his words have been confirmed by nearly every traveller in the Far East with whom I have spoken on the subject. No reform can be expected in the country from within, and a proof in point will be found in the history of the Palace Revolution of September 9th, 1898. The question, therefore, which presents itself is whether external pressure can be brought to bear on China with a view to reforming her Government without causing the dislocation of the Empire.

CHAPTER V

THE CHINESE PEOPLE AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Great antiquity of China's national existence—Stagnation of her organization as well as of her social, religious and administrative institutions—Unity of Chinese civilization notwithstanding varied surroundings, differences of language and of racial origin, it being much more inflexible than that of the Western world—Some of the principal characteristics of the Chinese—Love of false appearances—Gulf that divides the theoretical from the practical in all matters of Chinese administration—Corruption of the Chinese Government and its determination to impede progress—Lightness of the taxes—The mass of the people apparently happy under distressing circumstances—The good-humour and liveliness of the Celestials—Pity said to be absolutely excluded from the Chinese character—Why the Chinese make bad soldiers—Organization of the family and position of women—Vices of the Chinese: love of gambling, opium, filthy habits and superstitions—Their better qualities—The people themselves not in a state of decadence—Primary effects of contact with Western civilization.

THE Chinese are at one and the same time the most numerous and the longest existing nation in the world. The annals of the Celestial Empire date as far back as those of Egypt, and twenty centuries ago, when States which now rule the earth were in process of formation, China, having undergone several evolutions, was already constituted as she is to-day. The Chinese have never been subjected to any of those marked and repeated changes which, during the last two thousand years, have so profoundly modified the social organization and the manners and customs of other countries; and even the introduction of a new religion did not produce in the East anything comparable to the revolution which, at about the same time, occurred in the West through the spread of Christianity. Buddhism did not modify the Chinese people, but the Chinese people modified Buddhism after their own image and likeness, without, however, permitting the doctrines of Sakya-

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muni to exercise the least influence over their character, or change an iota of their ideas concerning life and morality, which were determined by Confucius and other sage Celestials, being in reality derived less from the meditations of philosophers or the inspiration of prophets than from the intuitive instinct of the race. The institutions of China have not altered the mental habits or method of life upon which they profess to be modelled, any more than has the theoretical principle of family existence altered the Imperial Government; for the Chinese even now often qualify their high officials by the endearing epithets 'father' and 'mother.' Political revolutions have not made a deeper impression upon the fossilized organization of the Chinese Government, than has religion on the character and manners of the people. The various dynasties that have succeeded each other have changed nothing, although some of them have been of foreign origin: the Mongolian in the thirteenth century and the Manchurian in our own time; but they effected no variations in the system of Government, and only placed certain functionaries to watch over the mandarins, precisely as the Tatar marshals are instructed to spy upon the officials of nowadays.

China has always been governed after Chinese methods, and although she has occasionally been conquered by foreigners, she has invariably absorbed them into her own civilization, and obliged them to observe her traditions. The Chinese care very little about the future, the greatness or the independence of their country; but they cling with extraordinary tenacity to their old manners and customs, and thereby offer a striking contrast to their neighbours the Japanese, who, notwithstanding their intense patriotism, will make any sacrifice, even that of religious principle and most cherished tradition, if they think that they may thereby benefit their Empire. The Japanese have almost the same conception of patriotism as Europeans, but not so the Chinese, with whom this virtue is merely a racial affair, which in the hour of danger invariably proves of little or no avail, especially against adversaries of a kind never previously encountered.

Does there exist, beyond this intense love of old customs and of an immutable civilization, any bond of union among the three or four hundred millions of human beings who constitute the population of China?*

* The population of China has been very variously estimated. There

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could possibly appear more thoroughly homogeneous than the Chinese; but it is not necessary to stay long among them to perceive that even from the physical point of view there are certain racial differences which make it more difficult at first to note the dissimilarity which separates their race from our own. Even more striking are the diverse dialects spoken in the Empire, several of which are not mere patois, but distinct languages, rendering it impossible for a native of Canton or Foo-chow to make himself understood at Peking; and in many provinces these idiomatic peculiarities are very interesting. In Fo-kien no less than three patois are spoken—the Amoy, Swatow, and the Foo-chow, which are utterly different from each other. Between the cities of Peking and Tien-tsin, scarcely thirty leagues apart, there is already a marked difference in the matter of dialect. It is also a noteworthy fact that very little sympathy exists among the Chinese from different provinces, who keep aloof from each other even when circumstances oblige them to live in the same town. Very marked, too, are the divergent characteristics and temperaments observable between the inhabitants of the North and those of the South, the former being much the most energetic and enterprising, but at the same time more hostile to foreigners. The Central Government is almost unknown by the multitudes outside of Peking, and it would be a comparatively easy task to raise an army in one part of China to fight against the inhabitants of another.

The question may now be asked whether China, which covers an area equal to that of Europe, and is even more thickly peopled, is less homogeneous than our own Continent. Does there exist between the various Chinese provinces the same differences that mark each of the nations that in the aggregate form Europe? From the geographical and climatic point of view it is evident that the difference is not very great, although China possesses very high mountains only on her Western

exist official statistics, but the question is, what faith can be placed in them? The 'Statesman's Year Book,' which is generally well informed, returns 383,000,000 for China Proper, and 402,000,000 for the entire Empire. Some travellers, however, are of opinion that these figures should be greatly modified, and hold that the correct medium is between 200,000,000 and 250,000,000, because the mountainous regions are very thinly populated, and travellers erroneously form an opinion from the condition of the valleys through which they pass, which are generally densely populated.

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frontier, and her plains are much more extensive and continuous. But from the ethnical point of view it would be an exaggeration to state that there is much analogy between China and Europe, since the former is certainly much the more homogeneous. The different countries of our Continent are inhabited by peoples who are only remotely related to each other, and who are merely united by the ties of a common civilization, whereas amongst the subjects of the Son of Heaven the ties are much stronger and the physical resemblance is more marked. I am, of course, speaking of the inhabitants of China proper only—of the eighteen provinces, to which might be added a nineteenth, Ching-king, or Southern Manchuria, now in process of colonization by the Chinese. The various tributary peoples belonging to the Celestial Empire, such as the Mongolians, the Thibetans and the Turki in Eastern Turkestan, are absolutely distinct from each other and from the predominant race; but although the dependencies which they cover constitute two-thirds of the surface of the entire Empire, they only form a twentieth of the entire population, and do not share in its Government.

It should be observed that the absence of any sympathy between the inhabitants of the different Chinese provinces might have been found quite recently exemplified in Europe, not merely between nation and nation, but between province and province in the same country, and that linguistic variations are still noticeable even in the most homogeneous countries. History is full of instances of intestine troubles which have existed in nearly every European nation, and it is but thirty years since the Germans were at war with each other.

I have often heard related the misadventures of two Celestials, natives of different provinces, who, whilst travelling in Europe, met one day only to discover that their sole means of making themselves understood was by speaking English. But does not this story recall the recent Slav Congress in Austria, whose debates had to be held in German in order that they might be followed by all the delegates? The existence of patois and dialects results from the inhabitants of certain districts having neither the time nor the money to go beyond their village further than the nearest market-town. Then, again, education in China does not tend, as in Europe, to produce unity of language, since its writing is quite independent of pronunciation, and the innumerable letters of its

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alphabet represent, not sounds, but ideas. The lack of any spirit of patriotism may be largely attributed to this state of absolute isolation, to which may be added a general and very profound ignorance. But patriotism as we understand it is, after all, a matter of modern sentiment, therefore not to be looked for in so antiquated a nation as the Chinese.

It matters little whether there be a common origin or not, since our notions of race are very difficult to define, and modern anthropological and ethnographical discoveries tend more and more towards the acceptance of the theory of the existence of distinct races. Whereas the patois of the ten northernmost provinces are merely dialects of the Manchurian languages, those of the south, especially of Fo-kien and Canton, are totally different, and apparently confirm the theory that the Chinese invaders who came from the north-east found the land already inhabited by a people whom they assimilated, precisely as they are doing in our time in Manchuria, and as did the Romans in ancient Gaul.

The entire population of China, excepting a few obscure mountain tribes, the remainder, possibly, of the autochthones of the South, whatever their origin, have for centuries moulded themselves on a civilization that penetrates far deeper into the details of every-day life than any known in Europe. The result is a greater uniformity among the people who have adopted it than will be found among men who follow a less rigid code that permits of greater latitude and affords a freer scope for the exercise of individuality. Many peculiarities in the Chinese character appear at first contradictory, even to those who have lived long in the country, and who assert that no European can ever thoroughly understand a Chinaman because his mind is so differently constituted.

The most striking characteristic of the Chinese, says Mr. Arthur H. Smith, an American missionary who has lived twenty-two years in China, in his admirable book 'Chinese Characteristics,' is their remarkable manner of 'facing' a thing. To save appearances, or to 'face' a difficulty cunningly rather than boldly, is the endeavour of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of the Son of Heaven, and is the key, moreover, to a great many other matters that might otherwise appear incomprehensible. Every Chinaman considers himself an actor, whose public words, acts, and deeds have nothing in common with reality. The most praiseworthy and even the most in-

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nocent of actions, unless it be performed in a certain way, will only cover its author with shame and ridicule. If a fault is committed, the guilty party is expected to deny it with the utmost effrontery in spite of convincing evidence, and on no account must he confess himself guilty, even if he is obliged to repair the injury done. From the highest to the lowest, the Chinese entertain a profound respect for shamming. A boy caught stealing will slip the coveted object up his sleeves, stoop down and pretend to pick it up, and with the smile of an angel present it to his master, saying, 'Here is what you have lost.' A little over a hundred years ago the mandarins who were escorting Macartney, the English Ambassador, into the presence of the Son of Heaven, profited by his ignorance of their language to place over his carriage an inscription to the effect that it contained 'the Ambassador bringing tribute from the Kingdom of England,' and thus kept up the fiction of the universal sovereignty of their lord and master.

Undoubtedly the observance of a certain amount of etiquette is both useful and praiseworthy, and so considered by all civilized nations; but Chinese etiquette is the most punctilious and complicated that was ever imagined, and never on any account to be neglected for a single instant. This excessive attention to outward forms, which, if they be but observed, may conceal any kind of iniquity, explains the fact that in China there is a deeper gulf between theory and practice than in any other country in the world. That it has always been so may be questioned, but at present the morals of Confucius have long since been lost in a code of etiquette which defines virtue as consisting in the observance to the letter of the three hundred rules of ceremony and the three thousand regulations of conduct, without paying the least attention to the spirit in which they were originally formulated.

It is in the system of Government in China that the contrast between precept and practice becomes most evident. As Mr. Henry Norman remarks with hardly exaggerated severity, 'Every Chinese official, with the possible exception of one in a thousand, is a liar, a thief and a tyrant!' Examples confirming this assertion are very numerous, and even the celebrated Li Hung-chang cannot be included in the list of those officials who are noted for their honesty, since he had to disgorge a great part of the immense fortune he had accumulated—twenty millions, it is reputed—to save his head

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during the Chino-Japanese War, when he had to purchase the goodwill of many Court dignitaries, eunuchs and others, notwithstanding which, money matters still occupy a great deal of his attention. I had the honour while I was at Peking to dine at the French Legation in the company of this exalted personage, on the occasion of the visit of the Admiral commanding the French Fleet in the Far East and several officers of his staff. Li conversed through the intermediary of an interpreter named Ma, to whom he spoke in the Fo-kien, his native dialect; it appears he speaks Manchu very badly. He put to each of the guests several polite questions usual among Orientals, inquired after their rank, their age, and invariably wound up his courteous inquiries by asking: 'Well, and what is your salary?' With us the income of an official is a matter of very little importance, but with the famous mandarin it was the essential.

For centuries the administration of China has been as corrupt as it is to-day, but for all this it has never driven the people to rebellion. It is true that occasionally there are local agitations, whose chiefs go so far as to pounce upon offending representatives of authority and convey them to the capital of the district, or province, to demand their degradation, which is more often than not accorded—a fact which inspired an English paper at Shanghai to descant on the 'democratic manner in which the Chinese participate in their government.' Oppression tempered by revolt is the rule which prevails in the Celestial Empire, but there is no fear of a general revolution against so degenerate a system. This administrative machine, however, which appears to us to be so detestable, only impedes progress, but does not affect the population, which is accustomed to routine habits hundreds of years old, and has not the remotest idea that a reform is either necessary or practicable. When an enterprising man wishes to introduce even the most insignificant of modern trades, he invariably attracts the attention of the mandarins, to whom he is obliged to apply for permission to carry on his novelty, and will only obtain it after much bribery and a promise to pay such a huge percentage on his profits as to render the returns of his venture too insignificant to be worth his continuing it. But for the uncomplaining and unprogressive, who have nothing to do with administrative affairs, life in China flows easily and quietly enough. The taxes are very light, especially for the peasantry,

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who live by what they harvest in their fields, or for the work-people, whose wants are very small. They fall, however, heavily upon commercial transactions and the transport of merchandise, are a great impediment to commerce, and though they never affect them directly, for their poverty is far too great to permit of their buying anything, they contribute indirectly to keep the inferior classes in a state of abject poverty. According to the investigations of Herr von Brandt, former German Minister to Peking, and a man who has studied China profoundly, the land tax in China reaches £5,250,000, being about 3s. per acre in the North, with a maximum of 13s. in the South. This is not much when we consider the intense activity of Chinese agriculture, which extracts from the soil almost everywhere two harvests annually. The total of the Budget, according to the same authority, reaches 100,000,000 taels, or £15,000,000. Other authorities estimated it as high as £24,000,000, but even this is not excessive. The following is Von Brandt's account of the different sources of revenue of the Chinese Empire :

Inland Revenue	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	£5,250,000
Treaty port Customs (obtained by the International Customs Service)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,450,000
Right for transit in the interior (<i>likin</i>)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,800,000
Native Customs and tax on native opium	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,500,000
Salt tax	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,500,000
Sale of titles and honorary distinctions	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	750,000
Tribute of rice	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	450,000
Licenses, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	300,000
Total								<u>£15,000,000</u>

The public revenues, gathered by the provincial treasuries, are sent on to Peking after deduction of the amount necessary for the requirements of the district. It is stated that only a third of these receipts is disposable for the needs of the Central Government.

The mass of the Chinese people endure, therefore, without much discontent, a Government which in ordinary time weighs very lightly upon them, that meddles very little in the affairs of their villages or communes, always very strongly constituted in the Far East, and, above all, never disturbs their ancient customs. Exceedingly poor, and only able to live by dint of hard work, and having a very severe struggle for life,

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the people have no time to waste on philosophical reflections, and, moreover, possess no standard of comparison to assist it to judge of the hardness of its fate. In addition to this, we must not forget that the Chinese are endowed by nature with an excessive spirit of conservatism and a patience and perseverance quite beyond praise, to which must be added a jovial good-humour that enables them to endure an existence which to the people of any other country would appear intolerable. Peasants and work-people alike have no hope of ever seeing their humble condition improved, and their prospective existence is one of absolute monotony, entirely passed in sowing and reaping, in carrying heavy burdens, in the turning of looms, or in labouring the earth, without having, excepting on a few feast-days, a moment's rest, save what is absolutely necessary for meals and sleep. None the less, they always seem very happy, complain very little, and thoroughly enjoy their few pleasures, and apparently absolutely ignore their troubles.

This happy spirit of resignation explains why the Chinese, notwithstanding their poverty, are one of the most contented people in the world, and, consequently, one of the happiest; but, unfortunately, they are exposed from time to time to dreadful calamities: an inundation, an epidemic, or a bad harvest, which brings about inevitable misery and famine to the entire population, who are left without any resources because their work has not been sufficiently remunerative to enable them to put anything by for a rainy day. Not a year passes without a dreadful calamity occurring somewhere or other in the immense Celestial Empire, causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, so that, notwithstanding the astonishing number of children born, the population apparently does not increase. Here, then, we have a striking application of the doctrines of Malthus; for in this society, into which no ray of progress is admitted, men multiply quicker than their means of subsistence, but natural calamities re-establish the balance by annually overwhelming a prodigious number of men, women and children.

The exaggerated sense of conservatism and the improvidence of the administration are in part responsible for the occurrence of these grave calamities, which are generally accompanied by a recrudescence of that chronic piracy and brigandage which is peculiar to China, being the sole means of gaining a liveli-

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hood left to many ruined wretches. Sometimes, however, the agents of the Government, after having done nothing either to prevent a catastrophe or to mitigate its consequences, increase it in times of famine by their avidity in seizing the rice, and thus provoke a rebellion, as happened in 1898 at various parts of the Yang-tsze-Kiang. But beyond these cases, in which the authorities are manifestly guilty, the Chinese people submit with the utmost resignation to calamities which they foresee and consider as merely natural, and which, when they happen, barely ruffle their habitual placidity. Death to such a people cannot have the same terrors it has for us.

Europeans are of all the civilized peoples of the earth those who complain most of life, but yet who hold most dearly to it. The people of the Far East, the Chinese as well as the Japanese, on the other hand, consider it least. Indifference to death seems to be with them almost a physical characteristic, the result of the singular insensibility of their nervous system. With respect to this last, we have plenty of evidence. The doctors in the European hospitals where natives are treated relate with amazement how their patients undergo the most painful operations without a murmur and without the necessity of having to resort to anæsthetics. In every-day life, too, the same curious apathy is to be observed in the extraordinary facility with which they can fall asleep whenever they choose, even in the midst of the most awful din and noise, and they can, moreover, remain for hours in one position without making the slightest motion. The reverse of the medal is that, although they are so indifferent to their own sufferings, they are without the slightest feeling for those of others, and can watch the writhing agony of a human being without expressing the least horror or sympathy. The dreadful custom of binding the feet of women in such a manner as to push the heel forward and double up the toes under the sole of the foot, inducing a sore that is never healed, is but one out of many examples of Chinese cruelty. The various and horrible tortures inflicted by the judicial tribunals are another illustration of the same dreadful instinct. The idea of bargaining with a person in danger of death, or with a man who has fallen into the water before attempting to rescue him from drowning, are things which would never suggest themselves to a European, but they come naturally to the Chinese.

The little value in which human life is held in the Far East

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is exemplified by the frequency of suicide, merely to vindicate a point of honour which in many parts of Europe would be settled at the point of the sword. The *hara-kiri* is not restricted to Japan, or to the upper classes of Chinese society. A Chinaman, even of the lowest order, will commit suicide out of vengeance, spite, or even through what he considers a matter of honour. Sacrifice of life is common even among women, if we may believe the following narrative extracted from a Chinese newspaper :

‘ One day a sow belonging to a certain Madame Feng, having done some slight injury to the door of a certain Madame Wang, that lady forthwith demanded compensation with interest, which was refused, whereupon Madame Wang announced her intention of committing suicide. This dreadful threat proved altogether too much for Madame Feng, who there and then determined to beat her enemy with her own weapon by flinging herself into the nearest canal.* Suicides are by no means rare among the upper classes of the literati, and quite recently a censor, a high functionary who possesses the privilege of addressing petitions to the Sovereign, awaited the passing of the Imperial cortège and then killed himself as a political demonstration, in order to add weight to a memorial he had presented concerning some promise of the Government which had not been fulfilled. The innumerable public executions form a pendant to the equally numerous cases of suicide.

The reader may be somewhat surprised that a people fearing death so little should make such bad soldiers ; but, after all, however lightly a man may hold his life, no one sacrifices it unless it be for some ideal or other. If the Celestials care so little about existence, they care still less for the grandeur of their country, patriotic feeling being absolutely absent from their nature. During the French campaign in Formosa it was no uncommon thing to see Chinese prisoners refuse to do tasks which they considered beneath them, and which they could only be induced to perform after having seen the heads of a few of their comrades fall under the sword. These very people who prefer death rather than derogate from their dignity are the same who have often been seen throwing down their arms on the battlefield. It is but fair to add that it is the military mandarins or officers who generally give the signal for a stampede. Possibly, if commanded by other officers, the Chinese,

* Quoted by Mr. Henry Norman, ‘ Peoples and Politics of the Far East.’

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with their wonderful power of enduring privation and callousness for death, would eventually form an admirable army which, even if it were unable to defend China against foreign Powers, would certainly prove a valuable ally to one or other of them.*

The practice of infanticide, especially of female infants, is another example of the different ways in which the Chinese and Europeans regard life and family ties. With us the love of parents for children is often greater than that of children for their parents; but in China it is quite the reverse. According to Confucius, filial piety was the noblest of virtues, indeed, the fountain-head of them all, and it is the one which his compatriots still practise most assiduously. Among the lower orders, however, this virtue is confined to the support of parents; but this is a duty never neglected. Among the twenty-four famous examples of filial piety is mentioned the case of a man who, at the very moment that he was about to bury his little three-year-old girl alive because he could not afford to keep her as well as his old mother, had his infant saved by the unexpected discovery of a treasure purposely placed in the intended grave by a good genie, who was eager to reward so beautiful an instance of filial piety. A still greater sin against this virtue is that of not possessing male posterity; for then the family becomes extinct, and the ancestors are deprived of those sacrifices to which they have a right, and which it is the first duty of every well-thinking man to offer them at regular intervals. Marriages are contracted very early, and there is no stronger evidence needed against a wife to obtain her divorce than that she has not had a son. The doctrine of filial piety as it is understood by the Chinese, and the worship of ancestors, which is its highest expression, have their good as well as their bad side. It forms the principal mainstay of that useless system of admiration of an irrevocable past in which everything is supposed to have been better than it can possibly be to-day, and which of necessity turns the people of the Celestial Empire from all desire for progress, because to do so would be an outrage to an ancestry whose wisdom can never be surpassed.

If this belief produces unfortunate social consequences, it

* The admirable and even gallant conduct of the Chinese Regiment from Wei-hai-wei under its British officers in the recent severe fighting about Tien-tsin affords a striking confirmation of M. Leroy-Beaulieu's words.—H. N.

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at the same time serves to consolidate family ties ; but even so it is pernicious, especially with respect to the condition of women. The lot of Chinese women is certainly not a happy one. Lodging rather than living with her husband, under his parents' roof, the young wife is never allowed to see her own family, excepting at certain fixed periods prearranged by custom. In their earlier years married women in China are exposed to the caprices and rebuffs of a shrewish mother-in-law, who is the tyrant of the family, and whose humble servants the daughters-in-law are expected to be. For all this, they enjoy a certain amount of liberty, for they are neither cloistered nor veiled ; but they very rarely leave their house, a state of semi-seclusion which does not prevent their morals being often very indifferent. 'In a district near mine,' an American missionary at Fo-kien assured me, 'there are very few husbands who are not deceived by their wives ; and in the one which is under my direction the state of morality, or rather of immorality, is pretty nearly the same.' Theoretically speaking, adultery in a Chinese woman is considered a very grave crime. As for the husband, he is not expected to practise fidelity. The average Chinaman delights in obscenity, and revels in improper stories and jests ; and when he has a little money to spare, spends it very freely in the loosest company. Those places of entertainment where Venus reigns supreme are not, as in Japan, situated in the best and most brilliantly lighted quarter of the town, for such of my readers who have visited Canton may possibly remember to have had pointed out to them the 'flower-boats'—floating constructions two stories high, whose internal decorations are of the most magnificent.

The national vice of the Chinese, however, is gambling, and it is one very few of them can resist. In his interesting monograph on Peking, Mgr. Favier tells us how the beggars in rags will stake their last scrap of clothing. Certain fanatics will stake their wives and children, and men have been known to wager away their finger-joints. A young Christian, who was an inveterate gambler, on one occasion staked and lost his wife, who was only twenty years of age, for the large sum of 15s. The missionary paid the debt and returned the young woman to her mother. A few months afterwards she rejoined her husband, and, adds the author, with the authority of his thirty-eight years of missionary life in China, 'in all probability he has staked and lost her again.'

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Intemperance, on the other hand, is extremely rare ; but those who would be drunkards in Europe, Mgr. Favier assured me when I was in Peking, are opium-smokers in China, where he estimates that about one-fifth of the population of the towns give themselves over to this horrible practice. In the country districts the number is very much less, and another missionary, who lives at Fo-kien in Southern China, estimates it at not more than five per cent. The habit of opium-smoking is very widely spread among the upper classes and the literati ; but its effects are not so pronounced among the rich as among the poor, who, by reason of bad diet, are less prepared to resist its effects, especially as they generally indulge in this vice in their leisure hours in the most dreadful dens, and, moreover, smoke a very inferior quality of opium. A young man who begins to indulge in this pernicious habit in his twentieth year usually shuffles off this mortal coil before he is twenty-two. The vices of the Chinese do not particularly shock foreigners who live among them, for they are not obliged to see them ; but it is otherwise with their universal and repellently filthy habits and intense love of all kinds of horrible noises, which they indulge in on every possible occasion, be it a sad or merry one, a marriage or a funeral, at festivals as well as at fires. What exasperates a European, however, more than anything else are the vulgar superstitions which replace among the Celestials the spirit of religion, which is quite absent, and which constitute another hindrance to progress. Their strange ideas with respect to *feng-shui*, or geomancy, often upset the least attempt at introducing any improvement even in European concessions or in such cities as Hong-Kong and Singapore. Then, again, the disposition of the Chinese mind does not admit of general or abstract ideas, and repudiates all sense of the ideal, and, in a word, is sterilized by such absolute materialism as to shock even the most cynical of Europeans. Take them for all in all, therefore, the Celestials may be described as a not particularly seductive or sympathetic people, all the less so as their ugly appearance is not compensated for by the charm of manner which renders the Japanese so agreeable and which enables them to gild even their vices.

The Chinese, however, have certain great qualities which are not precisely amiable, in spite of their extreme politeness, a matter rather of ceremony than of sincerity. These qualities are of a serious nature : patience, perseverance, hard work, the

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greatest aptitude for commercial pursuits, industry, economy, singular resistive power, and respect for parents and old age, to which may be added a remarkably contented frame of mind. Therefore, even if the Chinese Government presents every indication of decadence, it would be unjust to say the same of its energetic and hard-working subjects. Unquestionably the Government is not the only thing that needs reforming in China. There is the secular habit of always looking to the past for a type of perfection, which produces a certain atrophy of the Chinese intelligence, depriving it of all elasticity, originality and power of invention, and making it only capable of servile imitation, lacking even discernment—a fact which is admirably illustrated in the well-known story of the tailor to whom a European sent an old pair of breeches in order that he might copy them. This he did so conscientiously that he cut a hole in the exact place where there had been one in the well-worn pair which had been entrusted to him. In the same order of ideas is an instance supplied me by the Jesuit Fathers at Sicawei, near Shanghai, who showed me some drawings executed by young Chinese students, intended for the plates to be introduced in a publication on the fauna of the Far East. They included some drawings of the skeletons of animals, which, however, were disfigured, notwithstanding the entreaties of the Fathers, with certain accidental blots and marks that appeared upon the models. It is not impossible to induce the Chinese to learn new habits, but it is almost impossible to induce them to correct those which have been bequeathed to them by their ancestors. It is possible to teach them how to work modern machinery, but no power, human or divine, could teach a Chinese carpenter to work otherwise than he has been trained to do. At the orphanage at Sicawei, under the direction of the Jesuits, I was shown over the carpentry department, and was surprised to find each bench occupied by only one workman. The Father who showed me over the school informed me that it was absolutely impossible to induce two workmen to occupy the same bench. The younger orphans saw the older children and the adults who had remained in the service of the mission working thus, and insisted upon doing likewise.

The awakening of any sense of originality or invention in the mind of this people, by whom these qualities have been lost for the simple reason that they have been systematically trained to look backwards rather than forwards, will be a work of

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centuries, and only brought about by prolonged contact with the peoples and ideas of the West, and this contact is only now beginning. Before it produces its full effects upon the race it will doubtless do so upon the land of China itself, if permission can only be obtained to exploit the great natural wealth which lies undisturbed beneath the soil of this enormous Empire, and is thus lost to humanity. If the work of developing the economic resources of China be undertaken in a spirit of selfish interest, it will nevertheless very considerably ameliorate the lot of the Chinese people, if only by extending their field of activity, which is now limited to agriculture and small industries. It will allow them, for example, to exploit the subsoil, which is as much neglected in the Celestial Empire as the soil itself has been perfected by exceedingly skilful farming. If, as we believe, the great industries resulting from modern scientific discoveries have really contributed to better the condition of the people of Europe, surely their introduction into China should be most beneficial to the inhabitants of that vast Empire.

CHAPTER VI

FOREIGNERS IN CHINA—THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHINESE TOWARDS WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Concessions successively made by China to foreigners after the Wars of 1842, 1858-60, and 1895-98—Increasing tension between the Chinese and Europeans in consequence of the latter desiring to extend their action—Refusal of Europeans to conform to Chinese usages—Frequent breaches made by them against the rules and traditional customs of the Chinese—Contempt in which Western civilization is held by the Chinese notwithstanding their acknowledgment of its power and material advancement—This hostile spirit more marked among the literati, who direct public opinion, than among the people.

THE position of foreigners in the Middle Kingdom has been defined by various formal conventions, the first of which was the Treaty of Nanking, signed between England and China after the war of 1842, known in history as the Opium War. This was followed in 1844 by other treaties upon the same subject with France and the United States, and still later with other nations; in 1858 the treaties of Tien-tsin, which were concluded with France and England after a short war, but which were not ratified until 1860, after a much more serious campaign and the entry of the allied troops into Peking, greatly ameliorated the condition of foreigners in the Celestial Empire. Lastly, in 1895, the treaty of Shimonosaki, imposed upon China by victorious Japan, gave fresh facilities to foreign commerce. It is a characteristic fact, however, that no serious concession has been obtained from China until after a disastrous war, the Government of Peking never ceding to persuasion, only to force.

Since the sixteenth century Europeans have been able, as the Arabs and Malays had before them, to carry on commerce

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with Canton without being molested, simply because they did not show any intention of extending their commerce further. But in the second quarter of the present century they became more numerous and exacting, and tension began to manifest itself. The pride of the Westerners, who were more than ever convinced of the superiority of their civilization, and whose progress at home was making giant strides, burned to impose their ideas upon the whole world, and thereby wounded the equally great pride of the Chinese, stubbornly attached to those very ancient customs so haughtily despised by the barbarians, as they were pleased to call us. The port of Canton, consecrated by tradition as the exchange-market between foreigners and natives, no longer sufficed for European ambition, and a clamour was raised to get rid of the twelve merchants, or *hongs*, to whom the Chinese Government had conceded the monopoly of trading with the outer world. The foreigners, moreover, demanded the right to deal with whomsoever they pleased, and refused to submit any longer to the arbitrary taxation and treatment to which they had hitherto been subjected by the local authorities. These demands and others of a similar character, which appear to us perfectly reasonable, were considered exorbitant by the Chinese. To our incessant protests they answered exactly as they had done twenty—nay, fifty—years before, that we wished to compel them to do in their own country exactly as we chose, whereas, considering that we were their guests, the contrary should be the case, and that we ought to submit to their ways, however objectionable they might seem to us, and even contrary to the interests and development of our commerce. This is precisely what Europe to-day, as then, refuses to admit, unless the Chinese very considerably mend their ways, being of opinion that so vast a country has no right to refuse to allow its wealth being exploited for the benefit of humanity, and that if it cannot, either through want of goodwill or of the necessary means, turn it to account itself, it should allow others who possess implements perfected for the purpose to use them. In short, Europe demands the right not only to trade, but also to exploit, and she intends to have it, whatever may be the consequences.

This radical difference in looking at the same thing is the origin of every difficulty that exists between the Powers and the Celestial Empire. The peoples of the West, once they

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have made up their minds that a thing is likely to further their interests, insist upon its being carried into effect whether the Chinese like it or not, and care very little whether they offend the prejudices or even the sanctity of Chinese tradition. It is not merely in matters of commercial transactions that foreigners behave thus, but also with regard to religion. We profess the most profound admiration and respect for those men who at the risk of their lives bring the Gospel to those who know it not, and who sacrifice everything in the hope of saving souls, and we are thoroughly convinced of the vast superiority of the teaching of Jesus Christ over that of Confucius. Christianity, however, upsets not only the traditions, but also the foundations of Chinese society. No Government of Europe would tolerate a religion which advocated polygamy, and that of the United States rigorously opposes the spread of Mormonism. We must not therefore be surprised if the Chinese do not behold with a friendly eye a religion which opposes their great doctrine of the cultus of ancestors, and if they consider it nothing short of sacrilege and well calculated to overthrow morality and law, and infinitely worse from their point of view than polygamy is from ours. The employment of female missionaries by certain Protestant sects is another scandal, and the sight of young women living under the same roof as men who are not their husbands gives rise in their minds to a train of thought the reverse of edifying. It matters little that the worship of ancestors is but mere outward form, and that the lives of the missionaries are without any reproach: ancient traditions and customs are violated, and to these the average Chinaman holds far more tenaciously than he does to the truths they conceal.

The utter disregard paid by Europeans to even the most cherished customs of the Chinese, and the vast difference which exists between the two civilizations, together with the sense of superiority which both peoples with perfect good faith entertain for themselves, is doubtless at the bottom of that bitter feeling of contempt that causes every Chinaman to despise as well as to hate the intruders. They look upon them as so many barbarians, although Article 51 of the Treaty of Tien-tsin officially ordained the proscription of the particular character describing foreigners by this objectionable word. Our most complicated and wonderful scientific instruments are not considered by the Chinese as criterions of our superiority,

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and they recognise us to be skilful workmen and clever jugglers, but otherwise only vulgar and ill-educated fellows, and our lack of acquaintance with their ancient lore and literature brings a smile of pity and contempt to their bland countenances. They attach little or no importance to our inventions. 'I quite understand,' said Prince Kong to a foreign Ambassador who had just explained to him the theory and practice of railway travelling, 'that in Europe you should employ iron rails to transport you from one end of your country to another. Here we obtain the same effect with our waggons. We may not travel so expeditiously ; but, then, we are never in such a hurry.' This quaint observation was spoken twenty-five years ago, but it might easily be made to-day : the condition of mind which inspired it is identical and unchanged.

The Chinese may bow to our power, but it does not inspire them with the least awe. They entertain for us about the same agreeable sentiment that the traveller does for the footpad who suddenly puts a pistol to his head and demands his money or his life. And as this same ill-used traveller, in order to avoid a repetition of the assault, if he has to pass that way, procures the same arms as his aggressor, so the Chinese now and again appropriate some of our weapons of defence without knowing how to use them ; but, nevertheless, they remain thoroughly convinced as to the superiority of their civilization. There can be no doubt that if they were left to themselves, and European influence and pressure suddenly ceased, the Chinese would quickly pull up the telegraph-poles and the few miles of rail which with infinite patience and trouble have been laid, close their ports, and efface every trace of the detested innovations of the 'barbarians.'

This would naturally be the act of the Government. As to the people, it will continue to use the facilities introduced by Western civilization. The boats which ply along the coasts and up the Yang-tsze-Kiang are crowded with native passengers, who apparently enjoy the trip, and who pay the better share of the profits made by the various steam navigation companies, and the trains between Tien-tsin and Peking are always crowded. The Chinese also know perfectly well how to appreciate European administration, and three hundred thousand Chinese live upon the French, English, and American concessions at Shanghai, two hundred thousand at Hong-Kong, which was

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only inhabited by a few fishermen before the English occupation, and all the large towns belonging to the European colonies in the vicinity of China—Vladivostok, Manila, Saigon, Singapore, Batavia—are practically Chinese towns. They like to have their property and their commercial interests protected, and strongly object to being exploited and harassed as they are under their own Government. At the time of the occupation of Manchuria by the Mikado's troops, an English missionary who had long resided in the country assured me that the Chinese were very glad to escape from the 'squeeze' system, and from the many vexations to which they had been subjected by the mandarins, and were amazed to see the Japanese pay for everything they required.

The Chinese are not, therefore, unappreciative of our civilization, and since we afflict them with our presence, they think it wise to profit by the material advantages which we have introduced among them; but, with few exceptions, doubtless they would prefer the loss of these advantages to our company, and they never cease to despise us. From the moment that they can read they go to their old books as to a fountain-head, whence they drink intoxicating draughts of pride and vanity, and of profound contempt for all that is not of the wisdom of Confucius.

After all, it is not by means of the ignorant classes, but through the initiative of a few thinkers, that progressive ideas gradually filter into a country and reform it. Unluckily, in the Chinese Empire, owing to a defective system of education, the very class which ought to benefit their fellows—the literati—is precisely that which is the most obstinately retrogressive.

The gross superstitions, too, which are entertained by the people in the interior of China against foreigners form another barrier to an advance movement. That the lower classes should believe that the missionaries pull out the eyes of little children and use their bowels as the ingredients of infernal and magical concoctions, or that our doctors spread the pest whenever we want a war, is not much to be wondered at, for the same things have been repeated in Astrakhan and in some of the Russian provinces whenever there has been a rumour of an epidemic. But what is really very grave is that the literati, who are so all-powerful in China, foster these superstitions, and even spread them broadcast among the people in order

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the better to keep up the feeling of hatred which they ought to attenuate. At the bottom of all the risings against the missionaries are the mandarins and the literati. The great influence which these men exercise over the people, and their abhorrence of Western civilization, is the real cause why no progress has hitherto been made in the Chinese Empire.

CHAPTER VII

THE POSITION AND WORK OF FOREIGNERS IN CHINA

The privileges of foreigners in China—The open ports and the concessions—Great extension of privileges granted to foreigners by the treaty of Shimonosaki (1895)—Opening of fresh ports—Facilities conceded to commerce, and the right of establishing factories in the Treaty Ports—The speedy effects of these concessions—Silk industries—Chinese workmen : rise in their salaries—Prospects of Chinese industry—Fresh concessions granted in 1898—Opening of the waterways—Railways and mines—Great expectations resulting from these additional treaties—The *likins*, or native Custom-houses—Their oppressive exactions—Slow development of foreign commerce in China—Necessity for Europeans to penetrate into the interior and take their affairs into their own hands—Chinese resistance to this proposal.

FOREIGNERS who live in China, with the exception of the missionaries, are at present penned up in the twenty-six open ports, to which may be added six other towns or markets, situated on the frontiers of Indo-China, assimilated to the free ports, but doing a very limited trade. In each of these so-called open ports* spaces have been let on long leases, or

* The following is the list of the Treaty Ports: To the north of the Blue River, Niu-chwang, Tien-tsin, Chefoo, and near the mouth of the river Shanghai and its annex, Wusung. On the Yang-tze-Kiang: Chin-Kiang, Nanking, Wuhu, Kiu-kiang, Sha-shi, Hankow, It-chang, Chung-king—in all eight river stations, of which Nanking is not really 'open,' although mentioned in the French treaty of Tien-tsin. Not far from Shanghai is Su-chow, on the inland canals. On the coast south of the Blue River are Hangchow, Ning-po, Wenchow, Foochow, Amoy, Swatow. At the mouth of the West River is Canton, and higher up the river Sam-shui, Wuchow, and since the spring of 1899 Nanning-fu. On the Gulf of Tongking: Pakhui, and in the island of Hainan, Hoi-how. The open towns on the frontier of Indo-China are: Lung-chau, Mongtse, Ho-Kau, Szemao, Tchoun-ning-fu, and a sixth, Tong-hing, is not as yet occupied. The open ports were in 1842, according to the Treaty of Nanking, only five in number, but were increased by the treaty of Tien-tsin to nineteen; others were opened by

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even sold to foreign Powers—England, France, the United States and of late years even Germany, who has acquired a concession at Tien-tsin, where, by the way, Japan also has one. Although these concessions are on Chinese territory, they are considered as so many small republics, independent of the native authorities, and administered by Europeans, who reside there under the protection of their Consuls, who hold both judicial and executive powers. In these ports, protected by European law, is concentrated the whole foreign commerce of China.

The appearance of these treaty ports varies according to their importance, from the few houses surrounded by walled-in gardens, built on the sands of Pakhui to the flourishing cosmopolitan port of Shanghai, whose aspect is admirably calculated to flatter the vanity of Europeans. Once the bar of Wusung is passed, after some hours' journey down the Blue River, whose shores are covered with monotonous rice and cotton fields, the traveller might easily imagine that he was in Lancashire, so great is the number of factory chimneys that come into sight. The landing-place, or Bund, the principal thoroughfare of the town, which follows the quay, is lined on the one side with trees, and on the other by magnificent houses, built in the European fashion, the offices of the principal banks, steamship companies, etc. The other streets, inhabited by Europeans, although not very straight or broad, run either parallel to the Bund or else meet it at some point or other. Further inland is the Chinese quarter (within the concession), with its open shops, monstrous and gaudy signboards, and its fragile paper lanterns, fairly well kept, however—thanks to European supervision—and forming a marked contrast in this respect to the other native quarter beyond the concession, which is absolutely filthy. Once outside the town, we cross the cricket-field, the racecourse, the lawn-tennis court, and reach Bubbling Well Road and other wide avenues, fringed with the beautiful villas, surrounded by gardens, belonging to the wealthy European residents.

Before the Chino-Japanese War foreigners only had the right

the treaty of Shimonosaki in 1895, and by the convention with England signed in 1897. A more recent treaty with this Power (1898) promises, but without fixed date, however, the opening of three new ports: Kin-chau in Manchuria, Fu-ning in Fo-kien, and Yo-chau in Hu-nan (opened in December, 1899).

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to carry on their commercial undertakings in the open ports, and had to have a passport in order to travel in the interior. Isolated as much as possible from the native population, they could traffic with the Chinese only on the condition that they never attempted to alter any of the native methods of production, or introduced any European innovations, or endeavoured to exploit a single one of the innumerable natural resources of the country.

On the other hand, nothing was to be expected from private initiative or from the Government, which latter would unquestionably have vetoed any improvement, and only reluctantly permitted, on account of its political value, the creation of the telegraph-line connecting Peking with the extremities of the Empire. In 1877 the Europeans had actually to pull up the rails laid down on the short line between Shanghai and Wusung, and though the Chinese since 1889 have pretended to consider the construction of a line from Hankow to Peking, it has only been with the object of misleading the Europeans. No progress is possible in China under these unfavourable conditions, and the antiquated methods of the natives continue to hamper all commercial and financial prosperity.

The treaty of Shimonosaki, signed in 1895 at the close of the war between China and Japan, effected some very important changes in this respect, and in virtue of the most-favoured-nation clause, inserted in the treaties with the Powers, opened out a better prospect for foreigners of every nationality, who were thus able to benefit by the advantages conceded to the Japanese. Article 6 of this important document stipulated the opening of several new ports, and permits steam navigation along the coasts and up the rivers and canals leading thereunto. It goes on to declare that foreigners may visit the interior to purchase or sell merchandise, and that Japanese subjects may establish depots for the same wherever they like without paying any extra tax, and erect factories of all sorts in the Chinese open towns and ports, and import into China all kinds of machinery on payment of a fixed tariff. Goods manufactured by Japanese subjects on Chinese territory should be placed on the same footing with respect to inland and transit duties and other taxes, charges, and facilities for warehousing, etc., in the interior, as goods imported into China by other foreigners, and enjoy the same privileges.

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This clause is of very great importance, since it permits the combination of highly-perfected European machinery and cheap Chinese labour in the production of articles the raw materials for which, especially silks and cotton, can be obtained in the immediate neighbourhood of the free ports. The clause above cited may appear at first somewhat extraordinary, and in any other country but China it would be superfluous to stipulate that goods manufactured in the country itself should not be treated with less consideration than similar articles imported. But the Japanese negotiators understood their men, and are perfectly aware that if they had not inserted these special clauses, the advantages obtained would have been annulled by the Chinese authorities by a system of arbitrary taxation and other vexatious measures.

No very long time elapsed before the advantages of Article 6 of the Shimonosaki Treaty were made strikingly evident. In three years' time an entire district of Shanghai was occupied by not less than nine large cotton factories, working 290,000 spindles, which in 1898 were increased to 390,000, and close to them presently rose some thirty silk factories, which, in due time, will be considerably increased both in numbers and importance. In the other ports this industrial impulse has not yet been much felt, except at Tien-tsin, where a woollen factory has lately been established. In that great centre of industry, Shanghai, a certain falling-off has been observed in this extreme briskness, due to over-production, and also to a very legitimate desire to watch the results of industries already existing before launching into further speculations. Then, again, there was a fear that wages might presently rise to an exaggerated extent.

The labour market of China is undoubtedly enormous, but the supply does not respond as readily to the demand as in Europe, because the distances are great and the means of communication correspondingly few and difficult. However, the labourers living on the banks of the Yang-tsze, who are called 'Water-fowls,' constantly flock into Shanghai in search of work. They belong to that class of poor creatures who crowd the great Chinese cities, and whose only home is their *sampan*, in which an entire family accommodates itself in a space that would barely suffice for a single European. One can see their floating huts moored alongside the *arroyos* that furrow the suburbs of Shanghai. Once they begin to earn a little, they

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build a hut on shore, using up the material of their old boat-house, until they can erect something better by way of a dwelling. Salaries are distinctly rising in Shanghai, and when I was there in 1898 the factories were wrangling over their workmen and women—who are in the majority—in consequence of certain enterprising but unscrupulous managers of rival firms intriguing, by offers of higher wages, to induce the most skilled to leave their employers and come to them. The quality of the labour at Shanghai appears to be satisfactory, at least, so say the different managers, and in the manufactories which I visited I noticed that everything was scrupulously clean and orderly, quite as much so as in any average European or American factory of the same class. The work-girls do not live, as in Russia and Japan, and, indeed, as they did formerly in England and in other manufacturing countries, in a building near the place of business set apart for the purpose, and at the expense of the firm, but at home with their own families. Many of them are married women, and a great number, instead of leaving their little girls over ten years of age at home, request that they may be employed, so as to remain under their supervision. They are usually engaged on very light work, such as shifting the cocoons in the boiling water for the weavers. In the silk factories I visited they were allowed half an hour every day for what was known as 'school,' during which some senior workwoman—the mother or the elder sister—taught them the rudiments of their work. This system is excellent, and the managers declare themselves highly pleased with it, as it is likely to train good workers.

The working hours at Shanghai in the silk factories are usually from six in the morning to six in the evening, including an hour and a half for meals. In the silk manufactories the little girls earn $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. per day at first, which is increased to $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. after a short time. A clever workwoman gets about 9d. In 1891-92 the wages in the same factory, which was then on a very small scale and under a Chinese name, were about 30 per cent. less. In the larger factories the children got $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. a day and the women from 6d. to 7d. During the first few months that elapsed after the signing of the Treaty of Shimonosaki salaries were on an average about 5d. As exchange has not varied much since then, the rise is very considerable. 'The women and children now working in the better factories here,' says the British Consul at Shanghai in his Report, 1897, 'can

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now earn from 10s. to 30s. a month, which is quite a fortune for people who in the native factories rarely make more than 4s. a month, although they work hard all day!' The same Report observes that in certain branches of industry the Chinese workwomen earn more than would the same class in Italy. The under-manager who took me round one of the Shanghai factories, a Peruvian by birth, and, I fancy, a coloured man by origin, judging from his curly hair and high cheek-bones, told me that in his boyhood in Peru he had earned 2½d. a day at the same business, which is what is paid to child-workers in Shanghai.

It is, therefore, a distinct mistake to imagine that China is destined to remain the land of low salaries. Some considerable time may elapse before wages reach the high figure obtained in Europe, but there is every prospect that in the course of time a very considerable rise will take place, especially as industry improves, and the demand for skilled labour increases. The Celestials are pretty sure to look after their own interests in the matter by forming trades unions. Strikes are not unknown either in China or Japan.

These facts tend, I think, to dissipate, if not entirely, at any rate in part, the illusion about the famous 'Yellow Peril' which has so greatly disturbed certain worthy people. That 'peril' seems to me to be still remote, for, even if the people of the Far East did succeed in producing nearly all the articles which they now import from Europe, it would necessarily follow that the trade in them, being infinitely greater than it now is, would increase their profits likewise very considerably. It is equally certain that the first effect of the introduction into China of European industries must lead, as it already has done, to the bettering of the condition of the Chinese labouring class, both by augmentation of wages and consequent improvement in manner of living. If, therefore, European export trade may apparently suffer from the manufacturing of goods hitherto imported by the Chinese, such as cottons, for instance, matters will balance themselves eventually for the simple reason that, the richer the Chinese get, the more they will buy. Japan has already shown how the introduction of machinery has created a new branch of import of great value.

In order to realize these brilliant prospects, several very drastic alterations in the present position of affairs are needed. The permission, granted at the instance of Great

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Britain in 1898, allowing European navigation on the inland waters of China, and the concessions for the creation of railways and exploitation of mines, may subsequently lead to very remarkable results, but up to the present they have not been entirely successful. Industrial activity is still limited to the free ports and their immediate vicinity. The reasons for this state of affairs are worth examining, especially as they illustrate the determined opposition of the Chinese authorities to all measures of reform, and also indicate many points against which Europeans should complain.

The Chinese Custom-house duties were determined according to the treaties as much as possible 5 per cent. *ad valorem*. They may therefore be safely described as comparatively light, and are collected with great regularity for the Imperial Government on the European system by a staff admirably organized by Sir Robert Hart.

The undesirability of exposing foreign merchants to the arbitrary and corrupt methods of Chinese Custom-house officials led to the formation of an international staff of officers, which works perfectly and gives universal satisfaction. On the other hand, the great native firms are most scrupulously honest in all their transactions, having discovered from experience that 'honesty is the best policy,' and European merchants can only praise their way of transacting business. It is, therefore, neither on entering nor leaving China that difficulties occur, whether for importation or exportation. The trouble arises in the transport between the open ports and the places of consignment or expedition; the principal grievance arises through the system of *likin*, or of inland Customs, whereby an arbitrary and variable scale of taxation is exacted on goods passing through towns or over the frontiers of the various provinces, or even at certain determined places on the high-roads and rivers. This pernicious system is a great drawback to the expansion of European trade, and gives rise to endless bother and expense.

'Let us suppose,' said a gentleman, thoroughly acquainted with commerce in the Far East, at a meeting of the London Chamber of Commerce in 1898, 'that a train going from London to Newcastle had to be stopped three or four times on the way, so that goods might be overhauled and examined by officials whose main object is to extort as much as they can in their own interests, and who value goods arbitrarily at sight. Imagine, for instance, a consignment of skins getting damaged

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by the rain through careless packing, and on being weighed found heavier than declared in the invoice: the result is; that the luckless owner is charged, not according to the increased weight, but *fined* according to his personal property, say £50 or £100 on £1,000! Or, finally, what would become of British trade if we had to put up with *likin* officials, one of whom examines goods once in every three days, and another announces his intention of only doing so when ten trains have arrived?

There is a remedy for the *likin* system, and that is a 'transit pass'; but more often than not, as with most things in China, this is merely a theoretical improvement. On payment of a sum equal to half the original entry duty, all imported goods should be considered free of inland duty. But this regulation does not work, and no one avails himself of it, since the Chinese very ingenuously manage to evade it by charging 'a duty on arrival at destination,' which comes to the same thing.

It is not therefore surprising that, with all these drawbacks, in addition to a very rudimentary monetary system, Chinese commerce only attains £50,000,000, of which £27,200,000 represents imports, which is very small when one considers the enormous size of the country and its great wealth. The half of this commerce is divided up between four articles: £8,000,000 cotton and £4,800,000 opium (imported), and £8,000,000 silk, and £5,000,000 tea (exported). The last figures are inferior to what they formerly were, Indian tea having greatly affected Chinese tea as far as England is concerned. Its preparation still follows the old system, and its lasting quality is distinctly inferior to Ceylon and other teas grown in India. This is another example of the vast importance of introducing into China better and more scientific methods.

The export trade of China must inevitably remain very limited so long as foreigners are prevented from penetrating into the country and directing the exploitation of its resources. Whilst it was a mere matter of opening a few ports, the Chinese Government made no very serious opposition; but only the realization of its incapacity to resist pressure induced it to permit the introduction into the Celestial Empire of foreign capital, machinery, and industrial methods. Well may we ask, Can the Sick Man of Peking endure such violent treatment? Will he not succumb to the very powerful remedies that are being administered to him, and thereby fulfil the secret wishes of those who are anxious for his legacy?

CHAPTER VIII

CHINA AND THE POWERS

The Question of the Far East unexpectedly brought to an issue by the defeat of China—Foreign misconception of Chinese power, and the amazement of European diplomacy at its collapse—The new state of affairs created by Japanese victories—The aims of the various Powers in the Far East and their policy—England seeks an ally against Russia—Her sudden change of policy in 1895—She abandons China for Japan—Russia covets the whole of Northern China—Japan's wish to conquer the Celestial Empire—The treaty of Shimonosaki—Opposition of Russia to Japanese policy—Russia becomes the interested protectress of China—The convention between the three Powers, France, Germany, and Russia—Attempt to bring about a reconciliation between China and Japan—Substitution of a powerful Russian influence for that of England.

THE Chinese Question presents many difficulties, not only because the details are extremely complicated and the rival pretensions which it has created difficult to reconcile, but because of the unexpected manner in which it was thrust on the attention of Europe, at a time when diplomacy had no ready remedy.

The present position in the Far East is not the result of a gradual chain of events, but of the absolute surprise created by the unexpected results of the Chino-Japanese War. No doubt the collapse of China in 1894 was only the last act in a long drama of decadence, but it revealed to astonished Europe the utter incapacity of China either to reform or to defend herself, a fact for which we were quite unprepared. Japan alone knew the truth, and profited by her knowledge of her colossal neighbour's almost incredible weakness. Russia had suspected it, but was not sufficiently convinced to venture on carrying her conviction into effect. Thanks to the astuteness of the Chinese and their remarkable aptitude in all arts of

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deception, and the effect mentally created by the prodigious multitude of her population—between three and four hundred million souls—China had systematically fooled both Governments and public alike, who shared the same illusion as to her power. Certain events had, it must be confessed, conspired to maintain this illusion, notably the bold resistance which the French army had met in Tongking, under, no doubt, peculiar circumstances, but, nevertheless, such as induced people to forget, at least for the time, the facile victories of the Allies in 1860. Certain far-seeing writers—Mr. Henry Norman and Mr. Curzon, the latter one of the most brilliant young statesmen of the United Kingdom—had indeed realized that under a smooth surface there existed in China amazing weakness and corruption. But they preached in the desert. The war had only just broken out, when one of the best-informed organs of the English press, the *Spectator*, stated: 'We think the weight of opinion is with those who believe, as we do, that, if necessary, China could organize a most formidable army.' This was the illusion universally entertained in Europe, and, strange to relate, shared by the majority of foreigners living in the Far East.

By dissipating these illusions and exhibiting to the world the truth concerning China's decrepitude, the Japanese victories produced almost the effect of an earthquake. European diplomacy had foreseen that the war was likely to give rise to trouble, and Lord Rosebery even proposed to the Powers at the beginning of the conflict to come to an understanding with a view of stopping hostilities; but if the Queen's Prime Minister feared that complications in Korea might lead to Russian intervention, the other Powers were not less unfavourably disposed to see a naval demonstration in Chinese waters in which England should take the lead. It was therefore resolved that European diplomacy should remain inactive and watch proceedings, everyone believing that Japan would soon be expelled from Korea, and that both the Japanese and Chinese fleets, weakened in one or two naval battles, would collapse altogether from sheer lack of combatants. When, however, the Chinese forces were annihilated in the autumn of 1894, Europe was taken aback with amazement, so great was her surprise, not to say consternation. By the spring of 1895 the Powers had recovered from the shock they had received, but their policy had consequently to be changed with respect to a Power which they had

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believed to be formidable, but whose weakness was now revealed.

England, with perhaps excessive frankness, turned her back on her old ally China. At the beginning of the conference she had been the champion of the Celestial Empire, and the newspapers related at the time a curious incident which happened before Wei-hai-wei, which the Japanese squadron was about to attack. The British fleet upset their plan by saluting Admiral Ito, contrary to all precedents, before sunrise, whereby the sleeping Chinese were warned of their danger. On more than one occasion the English did not hesitate to threaten the Japanese, especially after the latter had fired on a British merchant ship conveying some Chinese troops.* There was no mistaking the peremptory tone of England when she gave the Japanese to understand that she had no desire to see the war extend to Shanghai and the region of the Yang-tsze.

But the battle of the Yalu and the taking of Port Arthur in one morning by the troops of the Mikado opened the eyes of the Cabinet of St. James's. What Britain desired in the Far East was, on the one hand, a political prop, and even a military one, if necessary, against the Empire of the Tsar—'a bolt to fasten the door against the ambitions of Russian expansion,' to use the significant expression of Herr von Brandt, and, on the other, a wide opening for her commerce and capital. Once convinced that Japan, firmly established in Korea and on the northern coast of the Gulf of Pe-chi-li, would become a far more efficacious 'bolt' than China, England began to favour the Japanese, and at the same time to advise the Chinese Government to abandon Peking, and establish itself nearer the centre of the Empire. If the Middle Kingdom was no longer a useful ally, it might still become a splendid prey, a field of extraordinary economic activity, so that the transfer of the capital to some point on the banks of the Yang-tsze accessible by sea—to Nanking, for instance, would have placed China at the mercy of the supreme mistress of the seas. The English, moreover, fully intended to force China to open her ports, and their commercial superiority and the influence which they have

* The story of the improper salute was a newspaper fiction. No foundation for it has ever been adduced. The 'threats' after the sinking of the *Kow-Shing* were wholly unofficial, and the matter was referred to arbitration by the two Governments.—H. N.

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already established over the peoples in the Far East would soon have enabled them to profit largely by this revolution.

If, however, the consequences of the Chinese defeat were realized in London, they were no less so in St. Petersburg, and subsequent events proved that Russian diplomacy was equal to the occasion. The Government of the Tsar had beheld the war with quite as much displeasure as England, and would have preferred the Far Eastern Question remaining in abeyance until the termination of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The object pursued by Russia in the Far East is, it should be remembered, absolutely opposed to that of England, and concentrates itself on the one issue—the securing of open sea. The vast Empire of the Tsars possesses no port in Europe, where the 'keys of the house' are in the hands, so to speak, of other Powers, and England barred her way to the south fifteen or twenty years ago in Afghanistan and Beluchistan. In the Far East somewhere in the middle of the century Russia contrived to descend from the Polar Sea of Okhotsk and to advance at the expense of China as far as Vladivostok; but this port remains closed for two months on account of the ice, and Russia has always considered her provinces of the Amur and of the Littoral merely in the light of temporary stations, whence she intended on some future and favourable occasion to push her way further south. Between 1880 and 1886 it was reported that she was about to obtain a concession somewhere in the Bay of Korea, or even in the isle of Quelpart, which is in the strait separating that country from Japan. A little later she seemed to covet Port Arthur or Talien-wan, which are free of ice, and are situated at the extremity of the peninsula of Liao-tung, which would provide her access to an open sea at the back of Korea and other advantages. At the narrow entrance to the Gulf of Pe-chi-li and only 50 miles from the opposite coast of Shan-tung, are ports which offer great advantages as naval stations, whence a rapid transport fleet could easily convey troops in twenty-four hours to Taku, and thence in four days' march to the Chinese capital. Once established at Port Arthur, and having plenty of elbow-room in Pe-chi-li, Russia could exercise over the Chinese Government, in its present capital, even a more irresistible pressure than could England have done had she been able to induce the Imperial Court to transport itself to the banks of the Yang-tsze.

Unquestionably the dreams of Russian aggrandizement have

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become much more ambitious since she has discovered how very weak the Sick Man of Peking is. She no longer seeks an open port on the Pacific, but apparently pursues her object, unostentatiously however, towards the complete domination of the Middle Kingdom, especially over her vast dependencies in Turkestan, Mongolia, and Manchuria—in a word, over the whole of North China. And as the Muscovite temperament is ever a dreamy one, who knows but that on the shores of the Neva the heir of Peter the Great does not already picture himself on the throne of the Sun of Heaven, commanding the latter's multitude of subjects, who are accustomed to submit to a foreign yoke, and might obey the Tsar as unresistingly as they did Ghengis Khan, even as to-day they pay homage to a degenerate Manchu, and as indeed they would have done to the Mikado, had not Europe put a stop to further advances on the part of the Japanese? The Mikado, too, who had been driven into the war by the repeated insolence of the Chinese and also by the justifiable desire to protect his commercial interests in Korea, may also, when intoxicated by his surprising successes, have entertained the thought that it might be possible for him one day to annex China. If this war had taken place fifty, or even twenty-five, years ago, when Europe paid less attention to foreign affairs, it is probable that the Manchu Dynasty would have been replaced by that of Japan. Possibly then the 'Yellow Peril'—the military 'Yellow Peril'—which to-day is but a mere chimera, might have become a very evident reality. The Japanese, after having thoroughly reorganized and disciplined the Chinese army, might at a given moment have let loose its innumerable hordes upon the Western world; but if in 1895 they had allowed themselves for a moment to dream of placing their Emperor upon the throne of Peking, the Japanese were not allowed to indulge in this pleasant vision for long, and were soon made to feel how intently and jealously their movements were watched by European diplomacy.

By the treaty of Shimonosaki, signed April 2, 1895, the Celestial Empire granted to her conquerors all their demands, recognising at the same time the independence of Korea, and allowing Japan, whose troops still occupied that country, a free hand. If this treaty had been ratified as it was originally drawn up, Russia would have had to renounce for a long time to come all hope of possessing an outlet to the open sea, and would certainly have had to see her influence substituted by

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a rival at Peking, who would have reorganized China possibly in a hostile spirit. She could not allow this, but she dared take no initiative by herself, fearing lest she might suddenly find herself confronted by England and Japan. She, therefore, before the signature of the treaty of peace, placed herself in communication with France and Germany, and endeavoured to make those Powers understand that the installation of Japan on the coast was as detrimental to their interests as it was to her own. She successfully converted them to her way of thinking, and on April 22 the three Powers addressed a Note to the Mikado, couched in the most courteous terms, begging of his Majesty to renounce his pretensions over the peninsula of Liao-tung, the establishment of his authority in that country being likely to create a permanent danger to the peace, not only of the Far East, but of the whole world. At first the Mikado, so it seems, was determined to resist at any cost, and to refuse to yield. His Government cast an eye towards England, to see if her support could be counted upon; but at that time the Cabinet of St. James's had not made up its mind whether it would openly espouse the cause of Japan or not. Possibly it was influenced by the absolutely anti-Japanese feelings entertained by the vast majority of English subjects living in the Far East, and it is also by no means improbable that she did not wish to assist a Power that might eventually become a dangerous rival to her own commercial supremacy. Perceiving at last that England would neither join the three great Powers nor back the Mikado in his pretensions, the Government of Tokio very wisely consented, at the time bearing great ill-feeling towards England, who now found herself isolated in the Far East. Nevertheless, resentment against Russia was so powerful, and the feeling of alarm entertained by the two insular Powers at the spectacle of the progress made by Russia so great, that in a short time a reconciliation was effected between them.

The intervention of what is known in the Far East as the New Triple Alliance resulted in consequences quite as grave and durable as the war itself. Its immediate effects dominated the politics of the Far East until the end of 1897, and even now continue to do so. The essential features of the new situation were the substitution in China of Russian influence, now become all-powerful, for that of England, the antagonism which has risen between Russia and Japan, and the friendly feeling

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which now exists between this last Power and England. The mandarins and the Court of Peking, whilst never ceding an iota of their pride or their firm belief in the superiority of their civilization, were, nevertheless, obliged to admit the irremediable weakness of the military power of the Celestial Empire. If the majority did not care much for China as their country, they one and all considered her to be their prey, and consequently required a protector against the Japanese, and they proceeded from Legation to Legation in quest of one ; as their situation was desperate, they were obliged to take what they could get, and, Russia being agreeable, they accepted her friendly offer, even though their new ally might eventually become a domineering master. This gave them time, and they counted upon their cunning, when a favourable opportunity presented itself, to set the Powers by the ears. Probably at heart they entertain less dislike for the Muscovite Empire than for any other European country, and, indeed, China has less friction with the Russians than with any other nationality. Russia can enter the Celestial Empire over her land frontier through countries very thinly populated by inhabitants not of Chinese race, who are not hostile to strangers ; whereas the other Europeans coming by sea are brought into immediate contact with the turbulent crowds of the seaport towns, where the least act of imprudence may give rise to grave incidents. Moreover, the subjects of the Tsar exhibit a greater degree of forbearance than the peoples of the West. They do not experience that innate contempt for men of colour, they are more tractable to the habits of the countries in which they establish themselves, and are not so forward in protesting against petty annoyances. The Orthodox Church, too, scrupulously abstains from all propaganda in China, and the Russian Legation is therefore spared those delicate questions concerning the rights and the wrongs of missionaries which so greatly irritate the Chinese. All this facilitates the substitution of Russian influence for that of the English.

We must, however, seek for the causes which induced France and Germany to enter, under the Russian auspices, into an unexpected alliance outside the question of the Far East. The harmony that exists between these two Powers is due to their desire to gain the good graces of the Tsar. Rivals in endeavouring to please him, they both answered all proposals which came from St. Petersburg favourably. Germany had no

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political interests in the East of Asia, and France only those of secondary importance connected with Indo-China, and therefore these nations never hesitated to regulate their line of conduct in the Far East in accordance with their political aspirations in Europe, and, the better to please Russia, forthwith modified their previously somewhat hostile attitude. During the war both Powers had been more or less favourable to Japan.

This change of conduct involved a considerable sacrifice, especially in the case of France, and signified the rupture of her old friendship for Japan, whose army had been formed by a French military mission, and whose battleships and arsenals had been in great part constructed and organized by Frenchmen, services which the Japanese recognised shortly after the victory of the Yalu by sending to the eminent naval engineer, M. Bertin, the grand cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun. France had not obtained great advantages from this friendship, but if she did not do so, it was more or less because she did not wish it, for it is certain that the alliance of the Mikado was offered to her in 1884 on the condition that she conveyed to the coasts of Pe-chi-li a Japanese army corps, intended to march on to Peking. France had also the right to expect after the war some commercial advantages, notably some important commercial orders to her great industrial firms, for the renovating of the fleet, much damaged by the war. By placing herself on the side of China, whose friendship might have been useful, the more so as she was a neighbour, although she was constantly wrangling with her, France gave up an alliance with the one country in the Far East which represents progress and has a future, and, what is more, she literally pushed her into the arms of England, who may one day make use of her against the French.

The sacrifices made by Germany were less important, for she could not expect in the Far East any considerable advantages. To begin with, she had seized the opportunity to play a political part on a stage where she had never appeared before, but being much more commercial than France, she had more to gain from the concessions which China would be obliged to make, and she could thus include this vast market in the sphere of her industrial activity and commercial enterprise. By mixing in the affairs of the Far East the youthful German Empire only obeyed the instinct of foreign expansion which

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obliges her to watch over her political and commercial interests in all parts of the world.

On the other hand, the action of the three Continental Powers presented considerable danger, aggravated as it was by the warlike intentions of the commanders of the Russian fleet. A rumour certainly existed in 1896 in the Far East, and, moreover, has since been confirmed to me by most credible witnesses, that between April 25, the day on which the Note of the three Powers was presented, and May 5th, the date on which the representatives of Japan announced their acquiescence, Admiral Tyrtof, who commanded the Russian fleet and who has since become Minister of Marine, invited Admiral de la Bonnninière de Beaumont to proceed with him to meet the Japanese fleet at the risk of provoking a collision, in which the latter would inevitably have been crushed. The presence of mind of the French Admiral, who evaded the invitation by protesting that he had received no instructions from his Government, and therefore delayed matters as long as possible, prevented an aggression which might have resulted in dreadful consequences, and led to a massacre in Japan itself of Russian and French residents, and, moreover, might have brought about extremely grave international complications. Who knows, too, but that public opinion in England might have been offended by such an act, and that on the morrow of an easy victory over the Japanese the Allies might have found themselves face to face with the British fleet?

It is certain that by taking sides with Russia in a question of only secondary interest to herself France incurred the grave risk of a war not only with Japan, but with England, a war in which her stake was far greater than that of Russia or of Germany, and the consequences of which she would have been obliged to bear alone. Fortunately, the prudence of Admiral de Beaumont smoothed over the angry feeling of the Russian commanders, which, however, manifested itself once more on May 8, 1895, the date on which the ratifications of the treaty of peace between China and Japan were to have been exchanged. On that day the Russian fleet was stationed in the roads off the Chinese port of Chefoo, at the entrance to the Gulf of Pe-chi-li, opposite Port Arthur, where the exchange of ratifications was to have occurred, ready for fight in case Japan refused her acceptance, in which case it was agreed between the admirals to oppose the Japanese near Ta-ku, at the mouth

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of the Pei-ho, close to Wei-hai-Wei, where their fleet was anchored. Alongside of the Russian fleet were two German cruisers, representing the German navy in the Far East; but Admiral de Beaumont steamed away, leaving only at Wei-hai-Wei the *Forfait*, thereby showing very clearly that he had no intention of taking part in a superfluous demonstration, which would only have resulted in increasing the irritation of Japan against the three Powers.

These warlike demonstrations presented a singular contrast to the extremely courteous tone of the Notes presented to Japan by the Russian, French, and German ministers. They had the effect of convincing Japan that she had in the future to count with the lasting hostility of the Tsar, and that the secret desire of the Government of St. Petersburg was not only to prevent her establishing herself on the Asiatic Continent, but also eventually to completely annihilate her. By a curious right-about-face, Japan now turned towards China, who received her overtures favourably. The fact was that at Peking the pretensions of Russia had created great alarm, and Li Hung-chang opened his heart to the Japanese Consul at Tient-sin, and begged the Cabinet of Tokio to give a conciliatory answer with respect to the question of Liao-tung, and solve it in a friendly manner, and thereby avoid increasing the responsibilities which weighed upon his shoulders. The Chinese Government, he added, was entirely at the mercy of the Russians, and could only be saved by Japan.

Was this intended on the part of the old diplomatist as a disguised offer of service? It is impossible to say. One thing only is certain—the Tsung-li-Yamen proposed that the Japanese minister, M. Hayashi, should negotiate directly, and offer as a compensation for Liao-tung not an indemnity, but an alliance with China and a concession for the railway to be built between Tien-tsin and Peking. The Government of the Mikado was inclined to accept this solution, but the three Continental Powers—that is to say, Russia—did not view the matter favourably. They wished, for better security—that Japan should not be bound to China only, but that the retrocession of Liao-tung should not be subjected to clauses calculated to prolong matters, and, above all, a cessation of the continuance of the Japanese occupation of Korea. They therefore insisted that the matter should be settled at once by the payment of a supplementary indemnity of 30,000,000 taels, or £4,500,000,

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payable on November 18th, 1895, the Japanese evacuation to take place within three months.

Japan was obliged to accept these propositions by an exchange of Notes signed on the 19th October, and she, moreover, agreed to withdraw her troops from Korea immediately. The attempt at a reconciliation and an alliance with the Celestial Empire had failed ; but since then the language of the Japanese press and of many of her statesmen proves that at Tokio this idea has not been entirely abandoned, and if they have not been able to confiscate China to the advantage of the Mikado, the Japanese wish to see her placed in a position to resist the pressure of other Powers and to exist by her own resources. On the payment of the indemnity, Japan endeavoured to obtain from China a formal promise that she would never cede to any other Power the territories which she had been obliged to restore. But Russian influence was already too firmly established, and the promise was refused. The new political line of conduct which the European Powers and those which had at first come to her assistance were about to follow with respect to China was now openly developed. If the Setting Sun had more worshippers now than the Rising Sun, it is assuredly not the result of any sentiment of chivalrous disinterestedness—quite the contrary.

CHAPTER IX

RUSSIA, FRANCE, AND ENGLAND IN THE FAR EAST IN 1895-97

The immediate results of the war—Issue of an important Chinese loan—Russia becomes guarantee for China, and in return obtains the right to construct the Manchurian Railway—Ability of Russian diplomacy in Korea—Faults and abuses of the Japanese in that country—Revolution in the Korean palace at Seoul—The King of Korea under the protection of Russia—Preponderance of Muscovite influences in the Far East at the beginning of 1897—Important advantages obtained by the Tsar's allies—Apparent disinterestedness of Germany—Treaty with France signed on June 20th, 1895—Energy of the French Minister—French protectorate over the Catholics of the East—Efforts made by England in 1896 to regain her influence at Peking—Anglo-Chinese Convention, February 4th, 1897—Opening of the West River to European navigation—A few fresh concessions granted to France in 1897.

IN the events which have transpired in the Far East since the War, and which have led to the present situation, two distinct phases mark the violent aggression of Kiao-chau. The first extends from the spring of 1895 to the autumn of 1897, and is that in which the Powers, after having come to China's assistance, obtained from her concessions in return for their good offices, whilst pretending moderation in their demands.

Altogether, the most important consequence of the War was the establishment of a heavy foreign debt. Hitherto China had only contracted in Europe insignificant loans of a few millions of francs. During hostilities her foreign indebtedness rose to £7,000,000, a mere trifle, and, moreover, the lenders were in possession of excellent security; but the War Indemnity and other urgent expenses necessary for the rehabilitation of the country mounted up to £48,000,000, so that now the interest on this debt, taking the rate at 5 per cent., would absorb £2,400,000, and, by adding the arrears

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of already existing loans, this figure would attain about £2,800,000, equivalent to nearly the whole of the Customs revenue. The Customs duties are paid in silver, but it would be absolutely necessary to stipulate, if a considerable loan is to be floated on the European market, that the interest should be paid in gold. The question, therefore, very naturally arises whether, in view of so small a margin, the fluctuations in the value of silver, which have already caused the *hai-kwan* taël to fall from 6s. 7d., its value a quarter of a century ago, to 2s. 10d., the average rate since 1897, will not sooner or later result in the Customs receipts proving insufficient to cover the payment of the arrears. Nobody in his senses would dream of lending money to China on the mere security of her general resources, and she would, consequently, be obliged to assign to her creditors new securities, and place in their hands the administration of new branches of revenue. On the other hand, stripped of about £2,800,000 from the total revenue, which the most optimistic estimate gives at £24,000,000, she would have to look for new channels to add to her income, either by increasing the taxes, or by permitting foreigners to exploit the resources of the country, conceding to them railway and mining concessions on the basis of leases or joint profits. The first proposal ran the risk of unpopularity; the second was more tempting, but it meant the introduction into the country of that very Western civilization which the Chinese Government had opposed with all its might for the last fifty years.

The monetary difficulties of the Celestial Empire brought about a renewed interference by Europeans in her affairs, if only in the collecting of the taxes, and, also, a sort of financial embargo, the dangers of which are sufficiently manifest in countries like Egypt. The Government of Peking was well aware of this, and, therefore, spared no effort in obtaining a reduction on the £34,500,000 War Indemnity, and even attempted to arrive at an understanding with Japan respecting the retrocession of Liao-tung without supplementary disbursement.

The great importance of this money question was nowhere better understood than at St. Petersburg, and one cannot help admiring the boldness and ability of the policy pursued by Russia. That countries like France and England, literally overflowing with money, should have ventured to secure a preponderating position in China by means of financial

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manceuvrings is not at all to be wondered at ; but that Russia, already heavily indebted with a public foreign debt amounting to over £240,000,000, should have been shrewd enough to subject China to a sort of vassalage, through the pecuniary services she rendered her, was indeed a masterly achievement.

M. de Witte, the Tsar's Minister of Finance, who devised this remarkable scheme and conducted it to a triumphant issue over the head of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, exhibited throughout the rarest political ability and foresight combined with business acumen. Russia was unable to lend China money, but she was willing to become her guarantor, and thus enable the Celestial Empire, backed by the principal banks of Paris, where Russian funds were at their height, to float a loan of £16,000,000 at 4 per cent. issued at ninety-four—that is to say, at the same issue price at which, before this security was granted, the French and German financial houses had offered to raise a loan at 5 per cent. The annual interest to be paid by China, thanks to Russian intervention, was thus reduced by a fifth, whereby the Celestials, although they obtained a bargain, at the same time committed a grave political error.

In accepting a foreign Power as guarantor, the Chinese Government rendered itself responsible to that Power only, and placed her financial and, above all, her political independence in far greater peril than she could have done had she negotiated directly with individual capitalists of various nationalities, whose pressure, in case of non-payment, would have been considerably weakened by the inevitable differences which would subsist between their Governments. This danger seems to have been thoroughly understood at Peking, where the necessary documents were not signed until the expiration of the last day's delay granted by Russia, and then only under extreme pressure, because the Chinese Government had evidently failed to find assistance elsewhere.

The Government of St. Petersburg, well pleased with this success, proceeded to strengthen its policy in China by further financial operations, and with the assistance of the Bank of Russia next created the Russo-Chinese Bank, Parisian financiers supplying the greater part of the capital, but leaving the direction of affairs almost exclusively in Russian hands. The Comptoir d'Escompte transferred its agencies in China to Russia, and the new bank established at the same time branches

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at Peking, Tien-tsin, Shanghai, and Hankow. Since then this bank has continued to be the principal agent of Russian influence in China, and undoubtedly it was at first almost entirely through its mediation that Russia negotiated the concession of the East Chinese Railway, which enabled her to continue her Trans-Siberian Railway southward through Manchuria, thus shortening the original line by several hundred miles, and enabling it to pass within 350 miles of the Gulf of Pe-chi-li. Russia, moreover, obtained the authorization to protect the works by her own troops, whereby she made herself mistress of Manchuria, whence she was able to dominate Peking until events allowed her to occupy Liao-tung.

Whilst she was amply paid for her services by China, Russia made herself no less active in Korea. The Japanese, who had occupied that country, perpetrated error on error. They had attempted to impose upon the Koreans with great abruptness the most varied and radical reforms. Many of these were possibly useful enough, but they ought to have been introduced with discretion ; others were unnecessary, and greatly irritated the people by wounding their most cherished customs and traditions. The Koreans, although not particularly clean in their habits, are invariably clad in white, are, moreover, addicted to smoking very long pipes, and to rolling their hair up into a huge chignon, which they surmount by an enormously broad-brimmed hat, whose crown is so small that they are obliged to fasten it to their heads by a long string. The Mikado issued a sumptuary law against long pipes, chignons, and wide-brimmed hats, and, moreover, ordered that the traditional white robe should henceforth be replaced by the dark-blue one usually worn by the Japanese. It is said that this unfortunate incident was the result of a conviction that Koreans, being obliged to hold their pipe with one hand, and to balance their enormous hats with the other, could never become hard workers. Be this as it may, the Japanese sentinels at the gates of Seoul made life unendurable to the unfortunate Koreans. Armed with a big pair of scissors, they pounced upon the unfortunate peasants as they entered the town on their way to market, and cut not only the strings of their monumental hats, but severed their beloved chignons, and shortened by at least three-quarters of their length the stems of their pipes—arbitrary measures well calculated to break their hearts with mortification and vexation of spirit. It is not to be wondered at that such

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impolitic conduct, added to occasional acts of violence, soon roused the indignation and hatred of the natives, otherwise a very inoffensive and peaceable people. On October 7, 1895, the Korean Queen was murdered in her palace by assassins in the pay of the Japanese, and with the complicity of the Legation. King Li-Hsi, a very poor creature at the best, whose reign has been one tissue of Court intrigue and palace revolution, after the assassination of the Queen, fell into a consternation of abject terror, completely abdicating his regal authority, and became so degraded that he even consented to sign an edict insulting the memory of the late Queen, and accusing her of shameful crimes. Innocent persons were now executed at Seoul as guilty of the murder, whereas the actual assassins were acquitted by a self-constituted Japanese tribunal.

In the meantime Russia very ably exploited the general discontent, and in an underhand manner offered her services to the timid King, who was not only terribly afraid of the Japanese, but also of his father, the Tai-wen-kun, a ferocious old gentleman, whose ambition had disturbed Korea for over twenty years, and who had been raised to power by the natives. His Majesty seemed disposed to accept the Russian proposal, but dared not leave his palace, in which he was kept a close prisoner. A riot ensued, whether spontaneous or provoked has never been divulged, which, on the night of February 11, 1896, offered him a chance of escape. The Tai-wen-kun was killed, and Li-Hsi obtained shelter at the Russian Legation, then guarded by a detachment of sailors fresh landed at Chemulpo, the port of Seoul, without any attempt on the part of the Japanese to prevent them. Li-Hsi, once safe in the house of the Russian Minister, where all the members of the Korean Government had found shelter, acted like a King in a comic opera, and became the plaything of Russia, precisely as he had recently been of Japan. He forthwith revoked all the reforming edicts he had previously signed, and annulled the decree degrading the memory of the unfortunate Queen, the trial of whose assassins took place in a High Court presided over by judges selected from various European nationalities, with the result that the responsibility for her murder was thrown on the Japanese.

The reactionary movement now became violent, and many useful reforms had perforce to disappear. A committee, composed of the highest native functionaries, the British Controller

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of Customs, and a few Americans, was appointed to study measures of reform, but they only met two or three times, and nothing came of it, so that in a few months all the old abuses reappeared. Nevertheless, by her sagacious conduct, Russia had the ability to win over the foreign representatives in Korea to her side, and Japan, in order to preserve the remnant of her influence in a country whose commerce was mainly in her hands, and where not less than 10,000 of her subjects resided, was now obliged to arrive at an understanding with Russia. The Convention of Seoul, signed May 14th, 1896, by the representatives of the two Powers, completed by that of July 29th, concluded at Moscow at the time of the coronation of Nicholas II., and drawn up by Prince Lobanof and Marshal Yamagata, accorded Japan merely the right to keep 1,000 troops in Korea for the protection of the Japanese telegraph wires between Fusan and Seoul and of her subjects settled in the capital and in the open ports of Fusan and Gensan. Russia also obtained the same rights, and, moreover, a concession to construct a telegraphic line from Seoul to the Siberian frontier.

The two Powers further agreed to lend the Korean Government their support for the reorganization of its finances and a sufficient police force to maintain order, and to permit, as soon as possible, of the withdrawal of their garrisons. In appearance it was a sort of Russo-Japanese *condominium* that was established in Korea ; but Russian influence, now all-powerful with the King, met with no further obstacle after the restoration of that Sovereign to his palace in February, 1897. A decree, ordering that all railways to be constructed in Korea should have the same gauge as that of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and that the debt of £300,000 contracted by Korea with Japan should be repaid, and, moreover, that none but Russian instructors should be engaged in reorganizing the Korean army, was also issued, which Japan considered a distinct breach of the Treaty of Moscow.

Russian influence was therefore, at the beginning of the year 1897, absolutely preponderant in Korea as well as in China. In both countries the Tsar's Government had played, with extraordinary ability, the part of protector of the conquered against the abuses of the conqueror, and also that of a redresser of wrongs, whereby it won universal approbation throughout the Far East. The Japanese victories now appeared

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only to have been obtained for the benefit of Russia, who substituted herself everywhere for Japan, in Manchuria as well as in Korea, and thus profited very considerably by the War without having to pay any of its expenses. If at its close Russia had the discretion to perceive the advantages which she might derive from intervention, and if she acted with energy and decision, she also knew how to curb the impetuosity of her admirals, who were eager to commit those very faults into which Japan had fallen, which undoubtedly would have brought about very serious European complications. She therefore at first abstained from annexing the peninsula of Liao-tung and the important stations of Port Arthur and Talien-wan, which she had compelled the Japanese to evacuate, and officially she made no annexations in Korea; but, possessing the right to construct a railway through Central Manchuria and to protect its works by her own troops, and being at one and the same time mistress of the situation at Seoul, Russia was able at the right moment to annex either Korea or Liao-tung, and bring the Trans-Siberian to the open sea through one or the other of these two peninsulas. She hesitated as to which she should select; the first was nearer Peking, the second brought her more directly to the Pacific, whence she could menace simultaneously the mouth of the Yang-tsze and the South-east of Japan. At St. Petersburg, however, it seemed that the Government was waiting for the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which was proceeding in hot haste, and which it was expected would reach the Amur in the first months of 1900, ere the psychological moment should arrive to strike a decisive blow.

Side by side with immense advantages acquired by Russia, those obtained by her allies seemed insignificant. Germany had not shown herself exacting; all she asked was a few acres of land at Tien-tsin and other naval ports where she might establish independent concessions intended to satisfy her sense of dignity. The absence of special concessions had not hitherto prevented Germany from achieving an extraordinary commercial success in China, but the future will prove that the German Empire entertains great designs in the Far East, the realization of which are merely postponed.

As to France, she got in return for her services the two Conventions signed at Peking by her Minister, M. Gérard, on June 20th, 1895. The first of these documents accords divers

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facilities to the extension of her commerce on the frontier between China and Indo-China ; the second ratifies, to her advantage, the frontier limits. A new market—Semaou, in the Yunnan—was now added to the towns of Mong-Tze and Lung Chau, opened to Franco-Annamite commerce in 1887. The customs on goods entering or leaving these markets and passing through Tongking, already reduced to three-quarters of the maritime Custom-house tariff of 1887, were again lowered to about two-fifths of the general tariff, so far as concerned products exported from any other Chinese port, or intended to be re-imported into any one of these said ports. In Article 5 of this Convention the following passage occurs : ‘ It is understood that China, in the exploitation of mines situated in the provinces of Yunnan, Kuang-si, and Kuang-Tung, may apply, in the first place, to French merchants and engineers, the exploitation remaining subject to the rules laid down by the Imperial Government in all that concerns national industry. It is agreed that the railways already existing, or to be constructed in Annam, may, after a mutual understanding, be extended on Chinese territory.’ Finally, it was further stipulated that the French and Chinese telegraph lines should be combined. The Convention respecting the frontier definitely extended the French possessions to the eastern shore of the upper Mekong, thereby giving France the territory situated on the border of the Shan State of Xieng-hong. England in 1894 had admitted the right of suzerainty of China over this little principality, as well as over one or two others, thereby creating a sort of neutral zone between her Indian Empire and French Indo-China.

A great deal was made over this Convention in France, and the energetic manner in which the French Minister at Peking had been able to obtain these concessions under the very nose of his English colleague, Sir Nicholas O’Connor. The negotiations closed, M. Gérard proceeded to the Tsung-li-Yamen on the day arranged for the exchange of signatures, to find, however, only one of the two Chinese plenipotentiaries present. This personage offered profuse apologies for the non-appearance of his colleague. ‘ Nothing should have prevented his being here,’ replied the French diplomatist. ‘ I pray you find him at once and tell him so.’ A few moments afterwards the second Celestial appeared alone, looking very sheepish. ‘ And your colleague, is he coming back ?’ asked M. Gérard. ‘ No ;

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I am afraid he is detained, and that he cannot return. Shall I go and fetch him?' 'I beg your pardon,' M. Gérard shrewdly replied; 'I will keep you here, and will go myself in quest of your friend.' At the end of an hour or so the two Celestials were finally brought together, and on being asked to explain their dilatory conduct, stated that the British Minister was in the next room, threatening, if they ventured to sign, forthwith to haul down his flag. M. Gérard was soon able to convince the Celestial plenipotentiaries that they had nothing to fear, but that they must immediately affix their signatures to the document. Sir Nicholas O'Connor, he assured them, once he was convinced of the futility of his intimidation, would soon turn his attention to other affairs. This anecdote, whilst it reflects great credit on the energy of the French Minister, and displays his knowledge of the Chinese character to advantage, emphasizes the declining influence of England in China in 1895 and 1896, as well as the annoyance experienced by this Power at the ratification of the French frontier and its extension towards Mekong. By confirming it, China violated, it is true, the engagements she had made when England recognised her position at Xieng-hong, but this did not concern France, for the State in question was as much the vassal of Annam or of Siam as it is of Burmah or of China.

What was the real value of the commercial concessions granted to France by China, and concerning which her press had made such capital? The reduction of the duties on all products passing by Tongking would have been of great value if the neighbouring Chinese province had been a rich one, but it is, unfortunately, quite the reverse. It is now time to glance over the region that can be provisioned and exploited through Tongking. It includes the greater part of Yunnan and Kwang-si, the southern half of Kwei-chau, and a small part of Kwang-tung, that long and narrow band of territory which this province projects over the Tongking frontier between the sea and Kuang-si. The Yunnan, the Kwang-si, and the Kwei-chau are the three poorest provinces of China, and cover a fifth of her territory, whilst possessing barely the fifteenth of her population, or, in other words, about 24,000,000 out of 380,000,000. They have been unfortunately devastated by the great insurrection of the Taipings and the Muhammedan revolts, especially Yunnan; the country is really only a conglomeration of mountains and plateaux, some of them 6,500 feet in height, and,

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moreover, the communications are very scanty, and it would cost an enormous sum to improve them. The report of the Lyons Mission, which explored this part of China in 1895-97, frequently mentions the great difficulties of transport and the steepness of the ascents, such, for instance, as the famous Imperial road of Ten Thousand Steps, which you ascend from the bank of the Red River to the Yunnan plateau, between Manhao and Mong-tze, and which in a distance of only 30 miles rises from 485 to more than 6,500 feet. It also mentions the paucity of population, as contrasted with its superabundance, in the basin of the Yang-tsze-Kiang and the coast provinces, In the Far East the mountains are almost invariably barren, even when there is very little cultivable soil in the plain below. It is said that the Yunnan is extremely rich in mineral ore, but, as once remarked an acute observer, who has recently visited nearly the whole of China, when explorers find nothing worth noticing on the surface of a country, they generally arrive at the conclusion that there must be something worth looking for underneath. Undoubtedly both copper and tin have been exploited for years past in Yunnan, but thus far the actual wealth of these mines is unknown, and it would be mere matter of conjecture to affirm whether they are worth working or not, or whether it would pay to construct a railway 300 miles in length to transport the ore, as these Chinese provinces on the frontier neighbouring Tongking produce neither silk, tea, nor any other valuable Chinese export product, and do not offer a particularly brilliant prospect at present. As to Article 5, relating to mines, if taken in the literal sense, it is simply a truism, but if one wishes to discover in it a disguised engagement, and read 'ought' instead of 'may,' it is a violation of the clause granted to the most favoured nation inserted in all Chinese treaties with European Powers. France had soon to recognise its futility on January 15th, 1896, at the time of the signing of the Anglo-French treaty relating to the affairs of Siam, by which, it is true, she profited little by the difficult circumstances in which Great Britain then found herself, and the two Governments of Paris and London agreed that all the rights and privileges acquired, or to be acquired, either in the Yunnan or more to the north at Sze-chuan, were to be equally shared.

The profit which France might have obtained from the convention of June 20th, 1895, was thus reduced to little or

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nothing. During the following year the negotiations which were being persistently pursued at Peking brought about other results. The right to reconstruct the arsenal at Foochow established by the French in 1866, and which they destroyed in 1884 under Admiral Courbet, was again restored to them. Several naval engineers are working there at present, and French foundries are supplying material. Such has been the share derived by France in the concessions made by China, to obtain which the nations made such flattering advances to Li Hung-chang when that astute old gentleman made his recent famous tour through Europe and America. It certainly compensated after a fashion for the loss of the custom of Japan, who at one time gave frequent orders to French factories, but who now deals exclusively with England and America for the ships and cannon necessary for her greatly augmented fleet.

Meanwhile, the French Minister at Peking has exerted himself in a creditable manner for the benefit of the Catholic missionaries. He has obtained the abrogation of those regulations which prohibited missionaries from purchasing estates in the interior of China, and exacted a promise that the next edition of the *Ta-tsing-lu-lieh*, a collection of laws issued by the Tsing Dynasty, should appear without the list of punishments against missionaries contained in the edition of 1892. Finally, he obtained authorization for the Lazarists to rebuild on the same spot the cathedral at Tien-tsin, burnt at the time of the massacre of the missionaries and nuns during the insurrection of June, 1870.

It is assuredly as the protectoress of Catholicism that France has of late years most worthily played her part in the Far East. Possibly she has not known how to convert to her material advantage the influence which ought to be derived in China from her religious position, and doubtless French policy in the Celestial Empire has been lacking in enterprise. She certainly did not derive from the intervention in favour of China a profit proportionate to the risks incurred, and has obtained from China not only less than her ally, Russia, but even than England, and by uselessly opposing the demands of this latter Power she has run the risk of irritating without any benefit that ill-feeling which divides these two great Western nations.

After a period of inaction during the year which followed the War, the British Government, if it has not positively reconquered

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its former influence, has at least gained a renewed hearing at Peking. Although China trembled before Russia, the presence in her waters of the British fleet did not fail to inspire her with a feeling of profound respect ; but, once the first moment of alarm was over, she again bethought herself as much as possible to begin afresh her old game of pendulum between the various Powers. The slow work of British diplomacy throughout the year 1896 fructified in the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of February 4th, 1897, by which China conceded to Great Britain certain important modifications on the Burmese frontier ; granted her back a part of the Shan States ; recognised her right to establish a Consul somewhere in Western Yunnan, Manwyne, or Chunning-fu ; engaged to open the roads leading to these places as well as to others ; and finally allowed the railways to be constructed in Yunnan to be united with those of Burmah. Lastly—and this is the most important point of all—a separate article prescribed that the Si-Kiang, or West River, which flows through Canton, should be open to European navigation as far as Woochow, on the Kwang-si and Kwang-tung frontier, 125 miles from Canton. The two river ports Samshui and Wuchow became treaty ports, and European concessions were established there.

This was for England some return for the mortification she had experienced twenty months earlier at the time of the Gérard Convention. If, therefore, in Yunnan, in spite of the equality of rights existing between Great Britain and France, the advantage was with the latter, by reason of the natural conditions rendering access less difficult from Tonking than from Burmah, the opening of the West River was a check for French policy, which had vigorously opposed it. By this waterway European vessels—that is to say, almost exclusively British steamers coming from Hong-Kong—would, in the first place, be able to trade with the rich valley of the lower Si-kiang, which crosses Kwang-tung, and reascends to the frontier of Kwang-tung, where they would meet the junks which bring to this point at a small cost the varied products of this province, and, moreover, distribute merchandise from Hong-Kong to the extreme navigable points of the West River and its affluents. These points are situated at a great distance in the interior, almost on the frontiers of Yunnan and Tongking, and at Lung-chau, thirty miles from Lang-son, one can see at high tide junks from Canton. Therefore all the

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commerce of Kwang-si which France had so coveted was to be drained by this new channel.

French diplomacy endeavoured to repair the unfavourable impression produced by this Anglo-Chinese treaty, which effaced the greater part of the advantages conceded to her on the frontier of Tongking, and in June, 1897, it was stated in Paris that China had ceded to France the right to construct a railway from Lao-kai, on the Red River, between Tongking and Yunnan-hsien, the capital of Yunnan, and to prolong it to Nanning-fu and even northward beyond the line projected to Lang-son and Lung-chau. This last concession should reserve for France all the traffic of the western Kwang-si, provided that it is really worth while constructing a railway to obtain it; for unquestionably navigable rivers have a distinct advantage over railways in so mountainous and poor a country. As soon as the former are opened they can be navigated, whereas it will require time to construct the railways, which, moreover, are very costly. In February, 1898, I was able to see for myself that the Si-kiang was already traversed by steamers, whereas the railway from Lang-son to Lung-chau, the concession for which was given in 1896, was not even commenced, on account of the many difficulties that had arisen with the local authorities. The opening in 1899 of Nanning to foreign commerce is well calculated to deprive France even of this little traffic, which will revert to Canton.

CHAPTER X

CHINA AND THE POWERS, 1897-99; 'SPHERES OF INFLUENCE,' AND THE 'OPEN DOOR'

Political calm in the Far East during the summer of 1897—Provisionary regulation of the questions that divided the Powers, and the maintenance of old Chinese methods—Landing of the Germans at Kiao-Chau in Shan-tung in 1897—England's anger at this act, and her efforts to avert the probable action of Russia in Pe-chi-li—Anglo-Chinese Convention of February, 1898—Opening of all the waterways to European navigation—The policy of the 'open door'—China recognises in March, 1898, the occupation of Kiao-chau and concession of the railway granted to Germany in Shan-tung—Session to Russia on lease of Port Arthur, and the immediate occupation of this port—Franco-Chinese Convention, April, 1898—Divers conventions granted in the Southern Provinces and session of the Bay of Kwang-chau-wan—Irritation of Great Britain, who obtains new and important advantages in June, 1898—Session of Wei-hai-wei at the entrance of the province of Pe-chi-li, and of Kowloon, opposite Hong-Kong—Fresh Anglo-Russian difficulties in November, 1898—Railway and other concessions granted to foreigners throughout the Celestial Empire.

AFTER the diplomatic wrangling which followed the war, a lull occurred in the summer of 1897 in the Far East. Each of the European Powers interested in China—Russia, France, and England—had obtained her share of the spoil. That of Germany was generally deemed modest, but it was believed she had no political interest in the Celestial Empire, and was quite content to develop her commerce. Meanwhile Russia and Japan had patched up their quarrel in Korea. Doubtless their arrangements were not of a definite character, and their mutual ambitions rather dormant than satisfied; but the advantages already obtained, and the preparations which both nations would have to make in order to be ready when they wished to return to the game, seemed to promise a respite for some years to come. Russia was constructing her railway,

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which, notwithstanding all the diligence brought to bear upon its completion, was not expected to reach the river Amur until the end of 1899, and the Pacific until 1903 or 1904. Japan, whilst preparing for the arduous task of reorganizing Formosa, was arming to the teeth, so as to be ready in case of trouble with Russia, which she feared inevitable. She doubled her army, and ordered a first-class fleet to be built in Europe and America, which was to insure her maritime supremacy on the coasts of China, but which could not be ready until 1904 or 1905. France, having definitely pacified Tongking, was occupied in studying the route of the various railway lines which had been conceded to her. England was hastening the construction of her railways in Burmah, and sending her steamers into the West River, while her capital, amalgamated with that of Germany and America, had the larger share in the industrial movement which had been created in Shanghai, and seemed likely to extend to other ports, especially after the treaty of Shimonosaki.

China herself, profiting by this lull, returned to her old sleepy habits : she had learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing. When her chief statesman, Li Hung-chang, was sent to Europe and America in 1896, it was not only because he was better equipped than anyone else, by his long intercourse with foreigners, to treat with them, but principally because he was in disgrace. This mission had been offered to Prince Kung, and even to Prince Ching, the Emperor's uncles. 'What have we done,' these illustrious personages probably exclaimed, 'that we should be subjected to this humiliation, and sent on a mission to the barbarians?' The tour of Li Hung-chang was, therefore, intended as a severe punishment, supplemented by the loss of his peacock's feather and his yellow jacket. If the observations which are attributed to him with respect to progress are true, his influence must incontestably have diminished, possibly owing to the vicissitudes to which he has been subjected since his return to China. Be this as it may, one thing is clear : he has not hitherto been able to overcome either the Court prejudices or those of the overwhelming majority of the literati.

The only progress made has been permission for the construction, under the direction of English and American engineers, of a line from Tien-tsin to Peking, to slightly prolong beyond the Great Wall the one which starts from

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Tien-tsin and the mouth of the Pei-ho, and ascends northwards along the coast of Pe-chi-li, and to authorize the reconstruction of the little line from Shanghai to its deep-water port, Woosung. These works organized in those parts of the Empire most frequented by Europeans, in the great open port of Shanghai, where half the foreign population of China lives, and in the capital, the residence of the diplomatic corps, were calculated to create an illusory effect. The English may also have wished to unite Peking to the sea, which they dominated in the Far East as elsewhere, to spite Russia for having installed herself in Manchuria. A longer railway from Peking to Hankow, traversing over 650 miles of the heart of China, had been projected since 1889, and a Chinese railway director named Sheng had been commanded to collaborate in the matter of its construction with Li Hung-chang and his rival, the celebrated Chang-Chih-Tung, Viceroy of Hankow. Much more progressive in all probability than Li Hung-chang, Sheng seemed really desirous of building this line; but he insisted that the material should be manufactured in China, and to this effect he had erected at Hanyang, near Hankow, and his capital Wu-chang, three towns which in reality form one vast city, an immense foundry, which was not likely, at any rate for many years to come, to supply the necessary material. After the War the united efforts of the Ministers of France and Belgium had obtained permission for a Franco-Belgian financial syndicate to construct the line for the Chinese Government, and then to exploit it. Obstacles, however, were thrown in the way, and although the Chinese had commenced the works on the Peking side, they were stopped in the autumn of 1897, owing to difficulties which had arisen concerning the interpretation of several clauses in the contract. It was the old story of Chinese shifty dilatoriness, and nothing came of any one of the reforms proposed, civil or military.

Momentarily satisfied by their newly-acquired privileges, the foreigners ceased, for the time being, clamouring for fresh favours. Everything was calm at Peking, and no one seemed to see any grave event likely to occur in the Far East, at any rate, before the termination of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which would give Russia the chance of making an advance step, when all of a sudden, in the month of November, 1897, Europe learnt with surprise that Germany had landed sailors in the Bay of Kiao-chau, in the Shan-tung Peninsula. The motive

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for this unexpected movement, we were assured, was to put pressure on the Government at Peking to conclude certain long-standing negotiations connected with the assassination of two German missionaries, and which, as usual in China, dragged unconcernedly along. At first the importance of this matter did not seem to create the impression that might have been expected. Many even believed that it was but an ingenious artifice on the part of the German Emperor to display the uses of a navy, and to force the Reichstag to vote the necessary credit for the increase of the fleet. But when William II. sent into the Far East his brother Prince Henry, in command of a squadron, requesting him at the time of his departure to make the weight of his 'mailed fist' felt, if need arose, there was now no possible doubt that the occupation of Kiao-chau was definitive, and that Germany was paying herself, tardily, it is true, but with less ceremony than her allies, for the services she had rendered to China in 1895. She had taken, no doubt, a long time about it, for she was hesitating as to which place she should choose for the naval station she was anxious to establish in the Far East.

If the landing at Kiao-chau had been thoroughly matured, it, nevertheless, appeared that the Berlin Cabinet had not taken the precaution to insure the consent of the other Powers. It was asked if Russia herself, who had her eye on this bay, in which her Far Eastern squadron had passed the winter of 1896-97, had not been caught napping. When the occupation of the bay became known in England, public opinion became violently excited. Although Germany seemed to have gradually detached herself from the Franco-Russian group, and to have approached Great Britain, and although English and German banks combined had agreed in 1897 to float a second Chinese loan of £16,000,000 on the European market, and notwithstanding that the finances of the two countries had often co-operated in China, the cordiality which exists between the subjects of Queen Victoria and those of her grandson were even now strained in the Far East. As soon as the occupation of Kiao-chau became known, there was a positive explosion of invective throughout the English press, soon followed by an avalanche of jokes when William II. toasted his brother, on the eve of his departure for the Chinese Seas, in an amusingly melodramatic speech. The misadventures of Prince Henry, who was delayed by divers accidents, and constantly obliged to coal at English

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naval stations, added not a little to the general and very ironical merriment.

It was not so much the action of Germany that gave rise to genuine anxiety in England as the fear that the Government of the Tsar might take advantage of it to make another advance in North China. If it mattered little to the English that Russia should occupy a harbour free of ice throughout the year, they were greatly exercised at the prospect of her approaching the capital of the Celestial Empire close enough to obtain direct influence in Chinese affairs. England insisted that a port of this sort should be open to the commerce of all nations, precisely like her own Hong-Kong or the Treaty Ports. Thus, while Mr. Balfour, in the early days of 1898, almost invited the Russians to secure for themselves an issue to the open sea, a few days later another of Her Majesty's Ministers—Sir Michael Hicks-Beach—declared, amid the applause of the entire press, 'that the British Government was absolutely determined, at any cost, even at the risk of war, that the "open door" in China should not be closed.' In order to oppose the quiet advance of Russia, Great Britain anticipated her by appropriating her hitherto successful financial policy, and offered to lend the "Son of Heaven" £16,000,000, which he particularly wanted. This last of the three great Chinese loans was the least guaranteed. The Customs receipts no longer sufficed to assure the interest, and it therefore gave the lender a greater excuse for meddling in the internal administration, and to exercise the stronger pressure on the politics of Peking. The conditions for this loan included the addition to the list of open ports of Talién-wan, in the peninsula of Liao-tung, which Russia had long coveted. By throwing it open to the commerce of all the Powers, its appropriation by any one of them would be rendered very difficult, if not impossible.

The game was certainly very well played, but in order to carry it to an issue, it was necessary to have a sufficient force on the spot to impose upon China the acceptance of its conditions. Now, the season was not propitious; in winter, when the Pei-ho is frozen over, Russia must remain more powerful at Peking than England. Scared by the threats of M. Pavloff, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, the Tsung-li-Yamen dared not accept the demands of Sir Claude Macdonald, the English Minister, notwithstanding the energetic manner in which they were presented.

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The direct loan was consequently not concluded, Talien-wan was not opened, and Great Britain had to content herself with an agreement signed at the end of February, 1898, in virtue of which she obtained, however, some very important concessions. European steamers were, after June, 1898, to be allowed to navigate in all the waters of the Empire. No part of the basin of the Yang-tsze-Kiang was ever to be ceded or rented to any foreign Power; a port was to be opened in the province of Yunnan, and the position of Inspector-General of Customs was to be reserved exclusively to a British subject, so long as British commerce should hold the first rank in the foreign commerce of China. The value of these concessions is apparent when we consider that the basin of the Yang-tsze is the richest and most thickly-peopled part of the Middle Kingdom. As a commentary upon this agreement, the House of Commons in March included in the Address to the Throne: 'That it was of vital importance for the commerce and influence of Great Britain that the independence of China should be respected.' In the course of the discussion Mr. Curzon, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, declared in the first place that England was opposed to any attack upon the independence or integrity of China, and that in the second she would resist any attempt to close any Chinese port to her commerce, so long as it was open, or to be opened, to the commerce of any other nation, and that, moreover, she was determined to maintain in their integrity all the privileges which she had obtained by the treaty of Tien-tsin in 1858. This was the enunciation of the famous policy known as the 'open door.'

Meanwhile, Germany, in the same month of March, made China ratify the occupation of Kiao-chau, which had been leased to her for ninety-nine years, and which she hastened, it is true, to declare a free port. An extensive radius of railways was at the same time conceded to her in Shan-tung, which she had constituted a 'sphere of interest,' and the right of pre-emption on all the railway and mining concessions which the Chinese Government might grant in that province.

Russia, on her side, alarmed at the Anglo-Chinese negotiations, came to the conclusion that if she delayed her occupation of the peninsula of Liao-tung any longer, she would risk, if not being forestalled by a rival, at least witnessing the creation of international interests calculated to render the execution of her projects more difficult. She hesitated no longer, and on

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March 27th, 1898, obliged China to sign the Convention ceding to her the lease of Port Arthur and Talien-wan, and the authorization to construct a branch line, uniting these ports to the East Chinese Railway. Thus she obtained her object. The Trans-Siberian had now a terminus on the open sea, and could threaten Peking from the entrance of the Gulf of Pe-chi-li. It looked for a moment as though the long-deferred struggle between the Whale and the Elephant were really about to take place. Two English cruisers were stationed at Port Arthur when this point was ceded to Russia. They put to sea, but on March 29th the formidable British Far East fleet, which had been immensely increased during the winter, was mobilized, one part steaming towards the north, while the other remained at the mouth of the Yang-tsze, ready to occupy, so it was said, the Chusan Islands, which command the entrance to the river. Russia was exceedingly prudent, and, in order not to add the powerful support of Japan to that of England, on March 18th she renounced all active intervention in Korea, and left that country open, if not precisely to the political action, at least to the economic interest of the Land of the Rising Sun. A conflict was averted, but the inevitable opposition of Russian and English interests, added to an accumulation in China Seas of warships of every nationality, hastily sent there after the affair of Kiao-chau, kept up a well-founded feeling of anxiety and irritation in the minds of the British public, further increased by a Franco-Chinese agreement signed in April. France remained, according to her habitual policy, confined in the poor regions of the south, but obtained from China the promise not to alienate on any account the territory comprised in the three frontier provinces of Tongking, and never to cede to any other Power than France the island of Hainan. To these clauses were added the renewal of the concession of the Yunnan Railway, and finally the cession on a long lease of the Bay of Kwang-chau-Wang, situated on the eastern coast of the Lei-chau Peninsula opposite Hainan, and, moreover, the Chinese engaged to appoint a French Director-General of Posts. This, of course, was an answer to the promise obtained by Great Britain respecting the Director-General of Customs, and it might have been of great importance to the French by placing in their hands the telegraph lines of the Celestial Empire which joined, independently of the British cable, the lines in Indo-China which stretched to the Russian lines in Siberia and thence

on to Paris. Notwithstanding the great political interest at stake, this advantage was unhappily allowed to lapse, no Director-General of Posts has been nominated, this post still remaining united to that of the Customs, under the direction of Sir Robert Hart. With respect to the other concessions obtained by France, it does not appear that England or any other Power need be much concerned about them. Hainan may have some importance to France, who could never permit any other Power to establish itself at the entrance to the Gulf of Tongking. As to the harbour of Kwang-chau, which is not of the first rank, the mouth being narrow, it does not extend the French sphere of action, but leaves her mewed up where she was in the far south. It has only brought her annoyances, and is certainly not a strategical point of primary importance, whence she might menace the position of her rivals in the China Seas.

Far more important were the cessions of territory soon afterwards made to Great Britain in compensation for the occupation of the ports of Liao-tung by the Russians. Their value did not consist in their extent, which was not considerable, being merely Wei-hai-wei and a little town in Shan-tung, and 400 square miles of territory in the peninsula of Kowloon, and immediately opposite Hong-Kong. Both were leased for ninety-nine years. The strategical value is, however, of the highest importance. In the peninsula of Kowloon, where the English had up to this time only a small piece of land, they now came into possession of all the heights and bays necessary to shelter the port of Hong-Kong from attack and to insure its extension. Wei-hai-wei, on the other hand, gave them precisely what they had long coveted—a naval station in the North of China, so that when their squadron was in these latitudes it would no longer be obliged to make a voyage of from four to five days in order to take in provisions or seek shelter at Hong-Kong. Wei-hai-wei, the fortifications of which were immediately undertaken, in a measure weakens Port Arthur, the two being exactly opposite each other, with a stretch of sea of only sixty miles between them, and the former is not much more distant from the mouth of the Pei-ho. Needless to say, being in possession of so excellent a station, England with her superior fleet will necessarily during many years to come be in a position to prevent the Russian squadron interfering with her projects, and also, notwithstanding the shortness of the journey, to

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impede any assistance by sea being afforded to Russian troops who might be operating in the north of China. The English, moreover, can from this position, by a dexterous movement, cut the line of railway between Tien-tsin and the Great Wall.

Notwithstanding these advantages, the insatiable British public was not satisfied, and complained that the Government had allowed Germany to occupy a privileged position in Shan-tung, and had, moreover, promised not to interfere with her rights in that province, nor to construct a railway starting from Wei-hai-wei, and, moreover, to consider this place as a sort of Far Eastern Gibraltar without any commercial pretensions, thereby consenting to the creation of a German sphere of interest in opposition to the policy of the 'open door.' When Parliament was prorogued in August, the Chinese Question had been discussed no fewer than eight times, and the Salisbury Ministry had been frequently and very bitterly attacked by its own supporters. The intemperate oratory of certain Ministers, and notably of Mr. Chamberlain, who unhesitatingly accused Russia of bad faith, and even went so far as to say one must remember when dealing with Russia the old proverb, 'He who sups with the devil must have a long spoon,' had not a little contributed to excite public opinion in Great Britain. In order to soothe matters a little, the Cabinet declared to Parliament that its Minister at Peking had been authorized to inform the Chinese Government that Great Britain would lend its support in order to resist an attempt on the part of any Power to commit an act of aggression against China under the pretext that she had granted to a British subject the concession of a railway or other public work.

This was a return to the policy of the 'open door' to which England attaches so much importance. She refused to admit that commercial privileges should be given to any one Power, or any preference for public works to be executed; in a word, she would hear of no 'spheres of interest.' Such stipulations are, indeed, diametrically opposed to the wording of the treaties, but in these times hardly, except by force or the threat to use it, can one expect even the most solemn engagements to be observed. England herself was obliged to concur in the German 'sphere of interest' in Shan-tung. In the months of August and September, 1898, it was once more feared that there might be trouble between England and Russia over

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the matter of the railway from Shan-hai-Kwan to Niu-chwang, a prolongation beyond the Great Wall of the line between Peking, Tien-tsin, and Shan-hai-Kwan. The principal bank in the Far East, the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, was to build it for the Chinese Government and exploit it, reserving as security a first mortgage on the line. Russia intervened, and objected that any railway concession should be given to any other Power than herself north of the Great Wall. After considerable discussion, the Powers arrived at an agreement, and the English company kept the concession, but only retained a lien on the already constructed Peking-Shan-hai-Kwan line to the south of the Wall.

In the midst of all the intrigues and unpleasantness which we have just narrated, Europe has, nevertheless, accomplished at Peking a noteworthy and unprecedented work. She has not only obtained very advantageous concessions for her commerce, such, for instance, as the opening to navigation of all the watercourses on which Treaty Ports are situated, but also the allotment to the European Customs Administration of the collecting of *likin* in the valley of the Yang-tsze, as a security for the third great loan of £16,000,000. She has also obtained the right to introduce into China the best machinery for the exploitation of her natural resources. The English are about to work the coal and iron mines of Shan-si and Ho-nan, the Germans those of Shan-tung, and the English and French together the mines of Yun-nan. Six thousand miles of railway are to be constructed, not only at the extremities of the Empire in the Steppes of Manchuria and on the plateaux bordering Indo-China, but also in the thickly-peopled central and eastern provinces, from Peking to Han-kau and Canton, from Tien-tsin to the lower Yang-tsze, in Shan-tung and around Shanghai, connecting towns of several hundred thousand, and even over a million inhabitants, through countries at least twice as densely peopled as France.

CHAPTER XI

THE FUTURE OF CHINA—MAINTENANCE OR PARTITION OF THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE ?

Necessity of proceeding slowly with the Reform movement in China, if the overthrow of the Empire is to be averted—Weakness of the Government at Peking—The Emperor and the Reformer, Kang-Yu-Wei—The Empress-Dowager and Li Hung-chang—Palace revolution in September, 1898—Enormous obstacles in the way of the Celestial Empire reforming itself—Reasons why it cannot follow the example of Japan in 1868—The possibility of partition—The interests of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, partizans of the 'open door' policy, and of Germany, Russia, and France—The dangers incurred by partition—Difficulties of effecting it pacifically, and also for Europeans to govern the hundreds of millions of Chinese—The anarchy that might result—Services which might be rendered to progress by the Chinese Government in preventing too rapid a transition—Possibility of converting the Chinese to material progress.

'EVERY time that the bones of China are rattled—and they have never been more vigorously than at present'—said a technical English paper, 'an increase of commerce follows.' Nothing can be truer; but, at the same time, it might be prudent not to shake the old skeleton too violently, too often, or too long, if we do not wish to see it tumble to pieces. China is a sort of amorphous State whose different parts are joined together by the very weakest ties, concerning which we know little or nothing, and whose main force consists in tradition and in the existence of a governing class of literati, recruited throughout the Empire, even among the very people. On the other hand, germs of serious disaffection do exist; the actual Dynasty is a foreign one, which, at the beginning of the century, the terrible Taiping Rebellion—only suppressed with the assistance of Europeans—nearly ruined, and the descendants of the old national Ming Dynasty are still living. The accession

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to the throne of the present Emperor was irregular, it seems, according to Chinese procedure, and the country is honey-combed by secret societies, whose object is the overthrow of the existing state of affairs. The mass of the people are totally indifferent to politics, and very rarely exhibit hostility to foreigners, if the latter behave with circumspection, unless, indeed, they are urged on by fanatics or malcontents, when, unfortunately, they are easily roused. In the principal towns of every prefecture and sub-prefecture there exists a heterogeneous mass of soured and fanatical literati, who pursue the humblest trades in order to keep themselves from starvation, who are intimately mixed up with the people, by whom they are treated with great respect, and who will obey their commands to overthrow the Europeans and their innovations.

The Government of Peking is too thoroughly convinced of its external weakness to openly resist any demand imposed upon it by the Powers, but if it be too hardly pressed, and forced to introduce or allow the premature introduction of all sorts of innovations, and in too many places at once, it may run the risk of exciting against it the literati, who regard, and not without reason, any extension of European influence as a menace to their privileges. Such action might easily lead to active opposition to all reform, especially in the central and southern provinces, more backward than those of the north, and, if leaders of the movement can be discovered, lead to the complete disorganization of the Celestial Empire. Trouble has already occurred in Sze-chuan, as well as further in the lower valley of the Yang-tsze. A rather serious insurrection broke out in 1898 in the Kwang-si and Kwang-tung, but without any result. We know that local troubles in so badly governed a country as China of a necessity must become chronic, but in many cases the news concerning them reaches Europe considerably embellished and exaggerated.

It is certain that the elements of disorder are just now greatly excited. Even at Peking rival factions are disputing for power; the events which occurred there in September, 1898, are little, and possibly never will be completely, known, and it would be impossible to relate with any approach to truth the tragedies and comedies that are constantly being enacted within the walls of the Forbidden City.

The Emperor Kuang-Su, a young man of twenty-five, with a sickly body, and, it is said, a weak mind, had been completely

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won over to the Reform movement by a literate of the new school, named Kang-Yu-Wei, who hailed from Canton. His Celestial Majesty, with all the zeal of a neophyte, was induced during the summer to issue a distinctly revolutionary edict. It was said that he went so far as to presume to wear a European costume, and that he even intended going personally to Japan to observe there for himself the transformation which had been effected in the last thirty years. The Reform party undoubtedly had entertained Japanese as well as English sympathies, and its chief, Kang-Yu-Wei, passed his last night at Peking in the Japanese Legation. Marquis Ito, it is said, discouraged the precipitation with which it was intended to carry out in a few weeks reforms that had taken more than a quarter of a century to accomplish in Japan.

Such an attempt had no chance of success, for it not only opposed many prejudices and interests, but was opposed by all the Manchu functionaries, by Li Hung-chang, who had been recently disgraced, and by the Empress-Dowager. His Celestial Majesty pretended to arrest this last-named personage, who is his aunt, and not his mother; but the astute Princess defeated his object. The great majority of the mandarins being hostile to the movement, she soon possessed herself of the necessary tools for her purpose. The Emperor was in his turn imprisoned in his palace, and forced to apologize and sign an edict placing the reins of Government entirely in the hands of the Dowager. The immediate consequence of this act was that all the mandarins of the old school, among them Li-Hung-chang, returned forthwith to power; Kang-Yu-Wei took flight on board an English vessel, and most of his partizans were either beheaded or sent into exile, and very soon all trace of their work was effaced.

From this imprudent attempt at reform we may derive a few useful lessons. In the first place it showed the instability of the Peking Government, and also the existence, but at the same time the impotence, of the Reform party among the literati; and in the second it accentuated that dangerous factor in the politics of the Far East, the inflexible antagonism existing between England and Russia. The Empress Tze-Hsi is undoubtedly a very clever woman; she first governed the Empire in the capacity of Regent, but since 1887 she has, with the assistance of Li Hung-chang, who is said to have been a former lover, done so in the name of her nephew, absolutely

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refusing to abdicate. Her rule has been undoubtedly pernicious to China, for it has invariably been reactionary. As an instance in point, an important Viceroy has been recently reprimanded for attempting to reorganize on the European system the troops in the provinces which he administered. The Tsung-li-Yamen has likewise in a very short time contrived to strengthen the party opposed to innovation, and all sorts of restrictions have been placed in the way of the exploitation of the mines. For all this, be it bad or good, the Government of Tze-Hsi and of Li Hung-chang is nevertheless a Government; but both the Empress and her Minister are aged, and one may naturally ask what will occur when they are no longer of this world.

The Reform party, which seems to have the sympathy of a few high functionaries, does not apparently include many of the mandarin class; the unsuccessful literati, who struggle for existence in the towns of the interior, and who are in immediate contact with the people, apparently remain outside of all notion of progress, being absolutely convinced of the immense superiority of the Chinese over the barbarians. It is therefore very difficult to imagine how a handful of innovators can ever be able to impose their ideas against so much prejudice. A revolution, such as occurred in Japan in 1868, which rushed that Empire into the ways of reform, stands no chance of being effected in China, and even if it were, it would only receive just such another rebuff as happened in 1898, or else lead to anarchy and the dismemberment of the Empire.

The situation in China to-day is essentially different from that of Japan thirty years ago. In the first place the Chinese civilization which gave way in Japan to European was not of domestic growth, but essentially an imported article of extreme antiquity, which never succeeded in stultifying the Japanese people as it has done the Chinese; what is more, ancestors and classics were never held by the Japanese in the same veneration as is bestowed upon them by the Chinese. Far above the traditions of Confucius and of the Wise Men of old stood the Mikado of divine descent and the spirit of national independence. The first object of the Japanese Revolution in 1868 was to restore the Emperor to the plenitude of his power, a result attained by the union of the principal clans, as we have already explained. Although it resulted in the suppression of feudalism and the introduction of European civilization, it was

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originally not presented in this form, and if the entire nation eventually accepted these innovations, it was because they had been consecrated by the divine Emperor, and, moreover, were approved of by a powerful army which had always been friendly to progress and prompt to resist reaction.

Those advantages that so greatly favoured the Japanese reformers are non-existent in China. There is no military party in Peking friendly to Reform or eager to assist the reformers in seizing supreme power at the right moment and helping them to retain it. The initiative, therefore, cannot come from either the capital or the provinces. Instead of the Japanese daimios, or hereditary chieftains, surrounded by innumerable and faithful vassals, we have in China viceroys who are invariably strangers in the provinces they administer, and are spied upon by Tatar marshals having at their disposal by way of an army a horde of ill-disciplined ragamuffins, whom, even if an attempt were made to transform them into genuine soldiers, a task which would require many years to effect, the Court at Peking, being against the scheme, would soon disband. No martial spirit or feeling of patriotism exists in China to induce the governing classes to give up their privileges, even though it were for the benefit of the country. The tenacious attachment of the Chinese to their very ancient but stationary civilization is their greatest impediment to progress, especially as love of country is a mere empty sound to the vast majority of Chinamen.

Another and very important difference between China to-day and Japan in 1868 is that thirty years ago Europe permitted the Island Empire to accomplish its own revolution without interference, whereas to-day the Powers would assuredly prevent any attempt at a too sudden evolution in the Government of the Celestial Empire, which would only plunge the country into a deplorable condition of turmoil. Even now the Dowager-Empress's party is known as the Russian, and that of Kang-Yu-Wei as the Anglo-Japanese. Possibly this may be an exaggerated view of the case, and that neither party is in the service of any particular Power; but the incorruptibility of Li Hung-chang must be taken with a grain of salt. It is, however, certain that the Legations watch with a jealous eye the intrigues of the various factions, and that the disgrace of Li Hung-chang is looked upon as a victory for England, and each return to power of the Viceroy of Pe-

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chi-li as a Russian success. No worse sign could possibly exist for a State than the perpetual interference of foreign Powers in its affairs.

‘Are we about to witness the dismemberment of China?’ is a question people are constantly asking themselves. No one in particular wishes for it, since the division of such an inheritance would be disputed by at least five or six claimants, who will only settle their differences at the sword’s point. For the past twenty-five years Europe has trembled at the bare thought of war, and we must not be surprised if she dreads the mere mention of the disruption of China, which would be even more dreadful, since it means universal war, in which the United States, Great Britain, and Japan, as well as the Continental Powers, would each take a share. Even if the matter were settled amicably, what country would care to govern eighty or a hundred millions of Chinamen? Some people say that it could easily be settled by not attempting to govern them at all, in other words, to let things go their way; but no European Power would, or could, do otherwise than rule them methodically, according to our modern ideas of government. To-day, if a band of brigands exists in any obscure corner of China, nobody troubles about it, but once that corner belongs to a European Power, the irresistible desire of attempting to establish order would assuredly lead to an insurrection. The introduction of European methods is certain to upset many of the old customs and traditions to which the Chinese hold with almost pathetic tenacity. It requires an amazing tact to govern the Chinese, a fact made daily manifest in Hong-Kong, and illustrated by the recent serious outbreak in the French concession at Shanghai, where a disturbance took place over the removal of a time-honoured sanctuary to make way for a public road. The difficulties encountered by Europeans in every country imbued with Chinese ideas—those of the English in Burmah, the French in Tongking, and the Japanese at Formosa—prove, if proof were needed, how great is the resisting power and the risks any European nation would have to encounter which attempted to govern even a fragment of the vast Chinese Empire.

On the other hand, each Power, whilst dreading the consequences of a partition, is equally unwilling to behold a rival carry off the lion’s share. It is, therefore, with an eye to an eventual partition that each nation endeavours to obtain a

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privileged position in certain regions, and to possess itself of spheres of interest by forcing China to make the singular promise never to cede any portion of territory in certain defined provinces to any nation but to the one which obtains the promise. But this sort of promise is fraught with difficulties, and a source of eventual hostilities between nations having pretensions upon the same region, just as it is between the partizans of 'spheres of interest' and those of the 'open door.'

In order to understand the policy of the various Powers in China, in which they see a very important field for exploitation, we must first consider their commercial interests in the Celestial Empire. The British Empire incontestably occupies first place in the foreign commerce of China, which in 1897 stood at 366,000,000 hai-kwan taels, or £54,900,000 (1 tael = 3s.). Of this 236,934,000 taels, or £35,540,100, two-thirds of the whole, belongs, according to the Imperial Chinese Customs Report, to Great Britain. Here, however, we must not be misled, for if we subdivide this sum, we shall see that about £5,500,000 alone belong to England, £5,000,000 to her colonies other than Hong-Kong, through which the remainder, that is to say, about £23,000,000 worth of goods, passes, Hong-Kong being merely a point of transit. Goods imported from Germany, America and Russia into China, passing through this island port, or being exported thence to the four corners of the globe, are put down to England. Then, again, a very important trade is carried on between the North and the South of China through Hong-Kong, and thus it comes to pass that Great Britain gets the credit for commerce which does not really belong to her. If Hong-Kong possessed proper Custom-house statistics, it would be easy to account for the origin and destination of the merchandize which passes through this port; but such statistics do not exist. Under these circumstances, we must turn either to those of the various countries of Europe and America, or to the detailed statistics of the Chinese Customs, which frequently rectify the total amounts, whereby we learn that £692,700 worth of Russian petroleum is imported, whereas the total imports from Russia by sea are only estimated at £485,100. The difference must, therefore, be accounted for as having passed through Hong-Kong. A comparison between the Chinese Customs statistics and those of Germany, the United States, French Indo-China, and other countries, obliges us, however, to admit that three-fifths at least of the

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trade of Hong-Kong really belongs to the British Empire, which leaves to the latter about £27,000,000, that is, 40 to 50 per cent. of the total foreign commerce of the Celestial Empire. In the matter of imports, the English reign supreme, holding at least three-fourths in their hands, and dominating the market by the two principal articles, opium and cotton. Moreover, their flag floats over 65 per cent. of the total tonnage registered in the Chinese ports; of 636 foreign houses of business established in the open ports, 374 are English; of 11,600 foreigners, 5,000 are British subjects; and English is the language most spoken throughout the ports of the Far East. When we take all these facts into consideration, we are obliged to acknowledge that, having so many interests to defend in this part of the globe, England has a right to let her voice be heard clearly in commercial affairs. We must not be surprised, therefore, if she insists upon the 'open door' policy in China. The question now arises, Does she seek territory in the Celestial Empire? She has apparently sacrificed the 'spheres of interest' theory by exacting from China an engagement not to cede anything in the basin of the Yang-tsze, and the English Jingoes are already dreaming that Great Britain will be mistress not only from the Cape to Cairo, but from Cairo to Shanghai. 'Are not the Arabian Coast and the Persian Gulf,' I recently read in an English paper, 'already ours, and morally subject to our protectorate? Once we possess the valley of the Yang-tsze, who is to prevent our constructing a rival line to the Trans-Siberian from the mouth of the Nile to that of the Blue River?*' Although just at present it were best not to count too much on the wisdom and coolness of the British, nevertheless, their statesmen seem to appreciate the dangers of so beautiful a dream. They, at least, understand that the peril of the British Empire lies in its enormous extent. The majority of the British would, no doubt, be satisfied if they were allowed to place their capital and their commerce on a footing of equality with that of other countries in the Celestial Empire, if the territorial encroachments of the Powers did not justify the fear of the creation of a protectionist tariff. We may, therefore, hope that Great Britain, having obtained all that she desires in the way of strategic

* It is to be regretted that the author does not give the name of the newspaper in which he read this ludicrous utterance; we should doubtless then see that it is far from representative of British opinion.—H. N.

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points for the benefit of her naval forces, and also a great number of commercial concessions, will remain contented with her lot, and not dream of attacking the independence of China, but rather be inclined to help her to regain power.*

After England the United States do the greatest business with China. They only figure for £4,500,000 in the Chinese Customs statistics, but their own official publications give £7,840,000. Petroleum and cotton goods are the principal articles of their commerce, which is sure to be enormously increased in the future as the Middle Kingdom requires more and more machinery, which is manufactured to-day much more cheaply in America than anywhere else. The United States are represented in China by thirty-two houses of business and 1,564 citizens; their mercantile marine is, however, very insignificant, but having of late assumed a position among the world's Powers, and being already installed in the Philippines, they are sure to increase their mercantile fleet very rapidly, and as they aspire to become one day mistress of the Pacific, they watch with a very jealous eye all that happens in the Far East. However protectionist they may be at home, they are resolute partizans of the 'open door' in this market, of which they justly hope to eventually acquire a large part through their enterprise. Already a coolness has occurred in their friendship with Russia, and in January, 1900, they obtained a guarantee that none of the Powers should establish differential tariffs in leased 'spheres of interest.'

Japan takes the third rank with a rapidly increasing commerce, which in 1897 reached £5,850,000. Her spun cotton rivals that of England and India. Seven hundred Japanese are registered as residing in the different ports. The Celestial Empire has no warmer friends at the present moment than the Japanese. The Japanese papers are full of articles which compare the position of the two countries to that of Prussia and Austria after Sadowa, and preach reconciliation, and a close alliance was already spoken of with enthusiasm at the close of the War. Many Japanese statesmen are studying this question, among them the Marquis Ito, four times Prime Minister, and Prince Konoye, President of the Chamber of Peers, who travelled in China, and stayed in Peking in 1898 and 1899.

* M. Leroy-Beaulieu cannot seriously believe that the independence of China is threatened by Great Britain. British policy is, as it always has been, to maintain her independence by every means.—H. N.

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According to certain signs, their overtures have not been altogether fruitless. The Government of the Empress-Dowager does not seem to entertain any particular rancour against the Japanese for the sympathies which they expressed for the Reformer Kang-Yu-Wei, and undoubtedly seeks some support in order to withdraw itself from the over-exclusive domination of Russia. If this last Power is feared in Peking, it would seem that Japan is at the present time the most considered, whose counsels are best heard, and who best serves as the intermediary for progress into China. It is from Japan that China obtains instructors for her army, and that the Viceroy Chang-Chih-tung not only borrowed money, but also engineers for his foundry at Han-yang. The cementing of a formal alliance will no doubt be prevented through fear of Russia, and very probably China does not desire it very sincerely. Possibly at Peking they continue to despise the Japanese as much as they do Europeans, although they may have a preference for the former. One thing is certain, and that is, that the relations between the Governments at Peking and Tokio are better than they were before the War. Of the Western Powers, England is most preferred by the Mikado's subjects, although even with her they are a little suspicious. A feeling of intense resentment is still expressed by the vast majority of the Japanese against Russia. A small minority, however, desire that an understanding should be arrived at with her. This party, however, also wishes for the 'open door,' China being the only outlet for their young and already important cotton industry.

These three nations—England, the United States, and Japan—complete the group of the whole-hearted partizans of the 'open door.' The British press has often expressed a desire to see an alliance effected between them, and if this were only created between England and Japan it would be very formidable in the Far East. The Japanese fleet is excellent, and whatever may be our opinion of the ability of the Mikado's sailors, it is certain that, once united to the English fleet under the command of an English admiral, it could soon sweep the China Seas, and it would then be easy to embark an army of a hundred, even of two hundred thousand men, whom it would be difficult, even according to Russian officers, for the Tsar's army in the Far East to resist. Perhaps Russia has pushed the Empire of the Rising Sun too much and too soon into the arms of England.

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Germany, who, according to her own statistics, carries on a trade with China valued at £3,400,000, of which £2,320,000 are imports into China, and who counts 104 commercial houses instead of the 78 in 1892, and registers 870 residents in the Treaty Ports, divides her preferences between the policy of the 'spheres of influence' and the 'open door.' If she has reserved a right of preference in the public works to be undertaken in Shan-tung, she soothes the irritation of the English by making Kiao-chau a free port; but, notwithstanding the antipathy which exists at heart between the two nations and the progress of German commerce, often at the cost of British trade, and thanks to the more obliging manners and greater activity of the German merchants, a distinct amelioration has taken place since the end of 1898 in the relations between the two Governments, and Germany seems for the present to have turned her back upon the Franco-Russian group in the Far East in order to support British policy. One province alone in China is not enough for her commercial enterprise, and she fears to see protection closing the other ports.

We now come to Russia. Her total commerce with the Celestial Empire does not amount to more than about £3,000,000, half of which passes overland by way of Siberia. Petroleum as an import and tea as an export are the two great articles of Russian trade with the Celestial Empire. There are very few Russians living in China, and those who do so are mainly established in the port of Hankow. Russia's objects in the East are almost entirely political, and it is very probable that her protective tariff will follow her territorial aggrandizement. Being already mistress of Manchuria, she officially fixed the southern limits of her sphere of influence, at the time of the affair of the Niu-chwang Railway, at the Great Wall. To the north is a vast stretch of land almost entirely desert. In all probability this limit is merely temporary, and possibly none really exists in Russian aspirations; but before declaring her policy she awaits the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The Empire of the Tsar, notwithstanding the 60,000 to 80,000 men already massed between the Amur, Korea, and Pe-chi-li, does not yet feel sufficiently safe to take a step forward for fear of bringing herself into conflict with England and Japan. The day the Trans-Siberian Railway is finished a step southwards may no doubt be made. The antagonism between Russia and

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Great Britain, both of whom aspire to be the leading Asiatic Power, will then no doubt become bitterer than ever.

The policy of France has been more often than not ostentatious, timid at heart and often vexatious in form. She has made a great fuss over a few commercial advantages obtained in the sterile provinces which border on Tongking, and she has opposed England without doing her any injury with respect to the opening of the West River. In certain affairs relating to European concessions at Shanghai and Hankow, France has unfortunately succeeded not only in vexing England, but in alarming the Germans, Americans, and Japanese by the excessive regulations which she has introduced in those territories which have fallen into her hands. It does not seem, however, that the French have contrived to obtain sufficient compensation for the enmities which they have provoked in defending, not without peril, interests which after all were not their own.

The part which France has wished to play in China has not been a strictly commercial one. French highly-finished and expensive fabrics are of no good in the Chinese market. If she only had the common-sense and enterprise to send to Tongking first-class weavers, and establish there a manufactory under French direction, with cheap native labour, she should soon be able, if she copied the cotton industries of India, to compete with Japan in the Chinese market. It is therefore the exportation of capital which ought to be her object in the Far East, in China as well as in Indo-China. Notwithstanding their activity, it is not countries like Japan and Russia, which are without capital, that can attempt to exploit the riches of China, but countries that are already advanced in civilization like Germany, the United States, and above all, France and England, who, by the introduction of the vast resources of their capital, are in a position to work the mines, railways, and other resources of the Middle Kingdom. If, instead of trying to obtain exclusive privileges in a poor region, which are of no use and only irritate other nations, France had supported them in their 'open-door' policy, she would have gained a good deal, without losing anything from the purely commercial point of view, and thus Frenchmen might have placed themselves on a common footing with men of all nations, in the same manner that the English and the Germans contrived to come to an agreement in business transactions, notwithstanding the divergence which tends to separate them more

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and more, and she would then have been able to place her capital to great advantage, and thereby have added immensely to her prosperity, not only abroad but at home, as was the case under the Second Empire, when she covered Europe with railways.

France might, moreover, from the purely political point of view, have played a conciliatory part, and have thus managed to prevent the dominant influences at Peking from becoming too exclusive, which might ultimately result in a terrible conflict, and she should have worked to maintain the independence of China. Now that the Chinese are permitting Europeans to take their riches in hand by constructing their railways and exploiting their mines, it seems to us that France ought to allow her to retain a sort of communal existence, in which the civilized nations might carry on their economic activity precisely as they do in Turkey, with the difference that the Empire of the Son of Heaven is much vaster, richer, and populated by a far more industrious people than that of Sultan Abd-ul-Hamid.

This is, of course, a solution of an apparently temporary character, but which might have a chance here, as elsewhere, of lasting longer than a score of other solutions which are deemed definitive, always provided that the Powers do not exert too much pressure on the feeble Government at Peking, and especially if Russia, once the Trans-Siberian Railway is finished, does not insist upon her demands in so violent a manner as to provoke simultaneous action on the part of the Powers, and thereby bring about a partition. The destinies of the Celestial Empire are, however, in a great measure in the hands of the Tsar, who has, fortunately, already given many proofs of sagacity.

The maintenance of the Chinese Government seems for the moment preferable, even in the interests of the opening up of the country and in the introduction of our civilization in its immense territory, to the partition of China between the various European nations. We do not say this because we believe that the Chinese Government is converted to progress, for we hold that, with very few exceptions, those who direct the fortunes of the Chinese Empire are quite as fossilized in their prejudices, as firmly believe in their decrepit wisdom, as eager to prove their hatred of Western civilization, and, moreover, as corrupt, as ever they were. At the same time, they are convinced

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of the impossibility of China resisting the encroachments of European civilization, and as resigned as ever to yield to external pressure. Undoubtedly the era of subterfuges on the one side and of menaces on the other is by no means closed, and in spite of reforms which have been, and are still to be, obtained in the future by Europeans, a considerable part of the pecuniary advantages to be obtained from the transformation of China will remain in the hands and up the sleeves of the mandarins. But if progress is somewhat retarded by this resistance, which, after all, will only be temporary, it will be better so than that it should be introduced too suddenly and cause unnecessary trouble. Meanwhile, the Government of Peking plays an extremely useful part. Some people have not hesitated to say that if it ceased to exist progress would be much more rapid, forgetting that anarchy would ensue, the end of which would be as difficult to foresee as it would be to find a means of terminating it, or of discovering a manner in which any European Government could govern 200,000,000 Chinamen. The losses which the re-establishment of a stable regime would entail, and the vast expense of subduing rebellion, would certainly exceed those resulting from the procrastination under the actual form of Government.

At the end of a certain period it is highly probable that the march of events may be accelerated, and when the mass of the Chinese people have been placed in contact with the results of Western progress, it is very probable that its great common-sense will do the rest. It is an appeal to their essentially commercial and money-making instincts that we must make if we wish to convert the Chinese, the most realistic and the least idealistic of nations. Railways will be the best missionaries of civilization in China.

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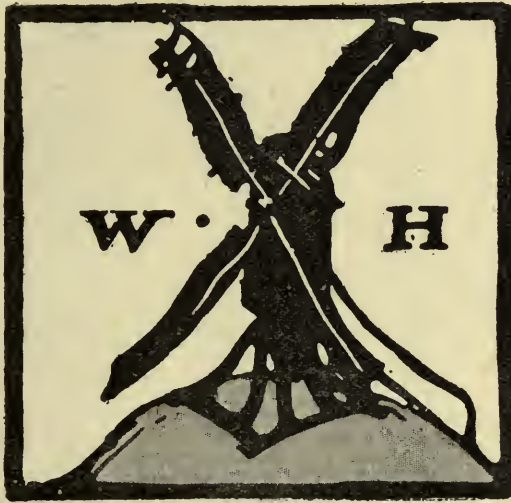
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